A COLLECTIVE COUNTERSTORY OF EVERYDAY RACISM, WHITENESS, AND MERITOCRACY IN HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA

Kelsey Nussbaum

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2021

APPROVED:

Sean Powell, Major Professor and Chair of the Division of Music Education
Elizabeth Chappell, Committee Member
Crystal Gerrard, Committee Member
Jaymee Haefner, Director of Graduate Studies in the College of Music
John Richmond, Dean of the College of Music
Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School

Nussbaum, Kelsey. *A Collective Counterstory of Everyday Racism, Whiteness, and Meritocracy in High School Orchestra.* Doctor of Philosophy (Music Education), August 2021, 219 pp., 3 tables, 4 appendices, references, 204 titles.

School orchestra programs are overwhelmingly concentrated in suburban districts, which are becoming increasingly racially and economically diverse. Diversifying suburbs lie at the crossroads of race, racism, and whiteness and findings drawn from these settings can have implications for racial dynamics in all educational contexts. The purpose of this instrumental case study was to explore how racially underrepresented students perceive race within an urban characteristic high school orchestra program through the lens of critical race theory. I developed a composite counter-story to examine the racialized experience of school orchestra told from the perspective of students of color with a particular interest on competition. Participants were six students and two teachers affiliated with the same high school orchestra program in Texas. Emergent thematic findings examined students' sense of racial belonging, mechanisms upholding the racial status quo, and fulfilling aspects of students' orchestra participation. Though the lens of critical race theory, I discuss how everyday whiteness, property of whiteness, and meritocracy function to maintain white hegemony in school orchestra.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I begin by thanking my advisor Sean Powell for his guidance through my doctoral studies and helping me ask better questions and dig deeper. Thank you, Donna Emmanuel and Don Taylor, for your encouragement to pursue a PhD. I am grateful for the friendship and scholarly relationship I have developed with Jamey Kelley during my time in Denton. Thanks to Crystal Gerrard for serving on my committee and helping me to see beyond my own field of vision. Elizabeth Chappell, you have played a crucial role in my journey, and I am grateful for the time teaching and learning alongside you. To my critical friends Olivia Tucker and Kari Adams, I have missed your daily presence and look forward to regular reunions. Tzefira Jones, I am grateful for the wonderful way our paths continue to meet and am excited for future collaborations.

Thank you to my orchestra directors for the inspiration to pursue a career in music education. A special extension of gratitude to Laurie Scott; you taught me to always say "yes" and provided a model for compassionate mentorship. To my former students, I am grateful for the patience they afforded me as I found my way as a novice music educator. Importantly, I want to thank the students whose voices are represented in this dissertation and their willingness to be vulnerable and share their stories.

During my time at UNT I have enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time with my mother, Kathleen, and stepfather, Matt and thank my father Steve for our thought-provoking conversations. I extend the deepest gratitude for my committed and loving partner, Mandy, who kept our lives in order and provided space and support as I emersed myself in research. Thank you for joining me on this adventure to Denton and keeping me on track when I needed it most. I look forward to our next journey!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Within the first year of my orchestral instruction in the 6th grade, I decided that music was going to be my "thing." I became enrolled in hour-long private lessons that year, which involved weekly transportation to my teacher's house. By the end of 8th grade, my family purchased my first bass and I had auditioned for the prestigious Greater Dallas Youth Orchestra. I consistently placed in the top ensemble within my school orchestra, successfully earned a chair in All-Region orchestra, and maintained private lessons throughout the duration of my secondary schooling. By the time I graduated from high school, I had visited multiple colleges out of state, traveled and performed throughout China with my youth orchestra, been a member of a Texas Music Educators Association Honor Orchestra, and upgraded to a professional-level instrument.

Upon graduating with my bachelor's degree, I was hired to teach orchestra at the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders in Austin, Texas. The position was a half-time job in the lowest-paying district in the area, but at the time I thought I had won the employment lottery, based on the prestigious reputation of the school[1]. Over 70% of the student population were students of color and nearly 60% economically disadvantaged. Very few students were able to either rent or purchase their instrument, and even fewer took private lessons. Many

[1] Students admitted to the Ann Richards School were able to apply for admission for Grades 6-9, though most students entered as 6th graders. All applications were reviewed by a committee of faculty at the school to meet an established criterion. From the pool of students whose materials met the standards of admittance, a randomized lottery system was used to select students who would receive an invitation for admission–75% of the accepted students were pulled from students who lived in a zip code zoned for a Title I elementary school and 25% from a non-Title I zip code. Each year, the school would admit around 120 6th grade students from an application pool ranging from 300-500 students in my time working at the school.

traveled 90 minutes in each direction on a school bus and were slammed with hours of homework as part of the rigorous Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) curriculum of the school. Even if they did manage to bring their instruments home, several students did not have the space to practice once there. In the five years I worked at this school, only one student among all music ensembles ever earned a seat in a Texas All-State ensemble.

As a result of these contrasting experiences through my journey from music student to teacher, I developed a critical perspective of the nature of competition in music education. I was raised in the high-achieving suburban setting of Plano, Texas, where I had abundant access to superior educators and musical experiences. Contrastingly, my music educator identity matured through the context of working in the geographically urban Austin, Texas school district where I developed a familiarity with the wide variety of student identities and experiences in urban settings. It is the recognition of my own privilege as well as my awareness of the challenges faced by marginalized students that has led me to question many of the hegemonic structures in music education.

While I could have provided a more general depiction of my musical upbringing, I intentionally chose to make explicit the experiences my privilege afforded me. Euphemistic depictions, such as “typical suburb,” “comfortable home life,” “supportive parents,” would have only contributed to the ways in which the field of music education tacitly centers white cultural norms. Even though my personal experiences would not stand out among the cohort of mostly white, upper-middle-class high school students who choose to purse music education degrees, I would argue that the experiences of my students in Austin are much more reflective of the broader experience of K–12 music students in the United States.

During my time teaching and living in Austin, I developed a passion for working in this *urban emergent* setting[2] (Milner, 2012). I enjoyed the ingenuity and scrappiness required to make my program budget work for my students. The teachers working in the Title I campuses shared a sense of community in the challenges we faced and the triumphs in seeing our students succeed. At the beginning of each school year, we would barter instruments and supplies to cover our students' needs and trade off-periods to travel to each other's' campuses, serving as gratis clinicians.

My students were compassionate, dedicated, jovial, sometimes angsty, always curious human beings. Most had supportive families who were deeply invested in providing exemplary educational opportunities for their children, and also happened to enjoy an occasional cafeteria orchestra concert. My students worked incredibly hard to maintain their standing at this selective magnet program, making the orchestra room a reprieve from their core classes. Due to the level of scholastic and familial commitments that my students had, they struggled to develop or maintain regular practice schedules outside of class. It did not take long for me to realize that the music education model that I had grown up with did not seem to fit for my students. Even though they attended class eager and excited to play, everything just took a bit longer to learn than the perceived standard.

Each year my orchestras were required to participate in the state standardized ensemble adjudication, commonly referred to as "UIL."[3] When it came time for the UIL each

[2] Category refers to schools located in second-tier large cities that face issues of poverty and housing shortages as a result of urban proximity.

[3] The University Interscholastic League (UIL) defines policy for the operation of sporting, academic and music competitions among schools in Texas. In the spring, they organize the Concert & Sight-Reading Evaluation across the state for secondary school ensembles.

year, I felt that I became a different teacher. The pressure from the visibility of ensemble ratings, which are publicly indexed, became a form of professional evaluation among music teachers and administrators. My students were well-aware of the tension, and while some thrived under the pressure, the majority did not. Even in years that I felt my students were well-prepared and confident on their music, it felt as if the stage performance was a roll of the dice. The anxiety, nerves, and novelty of being in a performance hall (in sharp contrast to our school cafetorium) ultimately resulted in performance errors and mishaps. I dreaded the emotional disappointment my students had to endure when they learned their hard work was not to be rewarded or recognized based on the standardized structures of music education in Texas. No matter how much I reassured them of my pride in their tremendous progress, the lack of a trophy spoke louder.

It has only been in the time since leaving public teaching that I have come to better understand the ways in which race shaped my experiences while teaching. As a White, middle class, cisgender female, I was among the majority demographic of teachers and we served a mission of preparing these "young women leaders" to "attend and graduate from college." However, despite the majority Latinx student population at my school, we were creating a campus community seated in white values with little awareness or concern for racial reflexivity. The shroud of whiteness that enveloped the school served as a color-blind lens through which our students' challenges were considered on an individual-level (Bonilla-Silva, 2013); grit, resilience, and zest would allow students to transcend systemic obstacles, providing a pathway into a STEM career of their dreams. Again, I share this reflection not because I believe that my teaching experience is unique, but instead is reflective of the way in which many white teachers

approach the teaching of students of color.

I approach my research, and my overall philosophy as a music teacher educator, with an aim to do better. I believe that the field of music education has a responsibility to make explicit the ways in which student music participation and retention varies along racial lines. Our field has only just begun to examine this concern, mostly documenting trends from an aggregate level (Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019; Kinney, 2008, 2010, 2019; Salvador & Allegood, 2014), but others have begun to examine these differences from a student-level (Brewer, 2010; Escalante, 2019; Gerrard, 2018). By failing to acknowledge the material ways in which race shapes students' educational and musical experiences, we undermine ourselves and the ability of our field to meet the needs of all students.

Based on my orchestral background, I am specifically interested in identifying barriers and improving access to string music education in the public-school context. With this goal in mind, I decided that my greatest point of impact to the field would be as a music teacher educator. My research interests are guided by a desire to identify institutional, structural, and societal barriers which may impede or dissuade students, especially marginalized students, from engaging in music education in public schools. I see music competitions as one such barrier that may disproportionately impact musical instruction for students and teachers in diverse settings.

Background/Rationale

> Competition is one of the distinctive features of American social, economic, and political life…Our society is not only competitive, first to last, it is *ultracompetitive*…To subdue, thwart, kill, or even raise doubt in the mind of the child as to the virtue of competition is to *unfit* him for life in the community into which he will be ushered at the end of his schooling [emphasis added]. (Bedichek, 1956, p. 76)

> Festival and contest ratings, marching competitions, and state performance assessments are founded on conformity to a single musical standard, and because that standard is associated largely with only one musical tradition, the assessments fail to support innovative, alternative, or global music practices. (Lind & McKoy, 2016, p. 139)

Powell (in press) argues that music competition has become ideological in nature, such that educators no longer question whether or not it is of pedagogical value—"because we do it, it must be good." However, researchers have identified that competitive structures may dissuade students of color (SOC) from participating in traditional school music ensembles (Brewer, 2010; Escalante, 2019; Gerrard, 2018; Lind, 1999; Lind & Butler, 2003). Furthermore, the role of student race in shaping experience is vastly under-explored in the field of music education. The inception for this research stems from a confluence of an under-observed phenomenon and missing voices within the field of music education. In the spirit of critical inquiry, I aim to examine the ways in which the hegemonic structure of *competition* shapes the experience of high school orchestra for racially and ethnically underrepresented students.

Competition remains a popular topic of discussion among music education scholars (Abramo, 2017; Austin, 1990; Hash, 2013b; Forbes, 1994; Miller, 1994; Powell, in press). Teachers often cite student motivation as a primary benefit of and justification for participating in both large-ensemble and student-level competitions (Buyer, 2005; O'Leary, 2019; Rawlings, 2019). Examinations of the teacher experience in large-ensemble competitions suggests that it provides logistical challenges (Rawlings, 2019), additional stress (O'Leary, 2019; Shaw, 2014, 2016), and may function to limit teacher agency (Tucker, 2020). Additionally, instrumental teachers working in Title I schools may experience such constraints more acutely as a result of compounding challenges within their context (Nussbaum, 2020).

Research on student perspectives of music competition remains limited. Among extant

sources, researchers have focused solely on large-ensemble competition and found that students enjoy the motivational and communal aspects (Gouzouasis & Henderson, 2012) but dislike the additional stress (Lowe, 2018) and extra rehearsals (Neil, 2005). Additionally, researchers have found evidence that students of color may be discouraged by competitive environments in music education (Brewer, 2010; Lind, 1999; Lind & Butler, 2003; Gerrard, 2018). Through conversations with Latinx high school music students and teachers, Escalante (2019) observed how competitions function to hold all students to the "hegemonic norms of white, affluent students," possibly sending the message that traditional band, choir and orchestras "aren't for" some students (p. 194). Even though some students voiced appreciation for the motivational aspects of competition, competition also eroded community (Gerrard, 2018) and functioned as a barrier to developing a caring environment (Parker, 2015).

Simultaneously, music educators are increasingly discussing issues of equitable access to music education for marginalized students (see Abril & Gault, 2008; Chappell, 2013; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Salvador & Allegood, 2014) and the compatibility of the Eurocentric ensemble tradition with an increasingly diverse student population (Bradley, 2006; Gerrard, 2018; Hess, 2017; Kratus, 2007). Researchers have observed that instrumental ensembles in particular do not always reflect the student population, with the overall enrollment in these courses having a higher concentration of white and more affluent students (Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019; Kinney, 2010, 2018). Due to the "big data" nature of these studies, they do not offer possible explanations for the discrepancies in enrollment. However, some scholars have begun to investigate the reasons behind these racial and socioeconomic disparities within traditional music education courses, exploring culture (Brewer, 2010), instructional methods (Gerrard,

2018), and race (Escalante, 2019). With the present study, I seek to further add to the understanding of how student racial identity shapes experience in instrumental music education.

Music education research remains behind educational scholarship, which has developed a much more robust understanding of the role of race in shaping educational experience and opportunity. Schools today are as racially segregated as they have been since integration measures following *Brown v. Board* (Garcia, 2020; Hussar et al., 2020) and schools with higher concentrations of SOC face poorer learning conditions (Kozol, 1991/2012). While these issues were once largely considered to be an "urban" problem, increased *suburban minoritization* (Frey, 2018) has led to a need to reexamine how race, poverty, and geography intersect. Milner (2012) suggested the term *urban characteristic* to account for schools that are experiencing challenges associated with urban contexts, but geographically are located outside of the major metropolitan areas. Diamond et al. (2021) urge for "more educational research that uses both theoretical and nuanced empirical analysis to understand race, racism, and whiteness in diversifying suburban schools and communities" (p. 251).

Orchestra programs are heavily concentrated in suburban and urban school districts (Smith et al., 2018) where there is likely to be higher concentration of low-income students and students of color (Hussar et al., 2020). In Texas, Chappell and Nussbaum (2019) found that 70% of schools with orchestra programs are in schools that qualify for Title I funding, 50% are in majority Latinx schools, and more than 95% of programs are in either urban, suburban, or exurban schools. Examining NCES data, Strietelmeier (2019) similarly found a positive relationship between campus SOC population and availability of orchestra instruction. While

urban characteristic schools may only represent a narrow proportion of the total make-up of public schools nationwide, they likely represent a large subsect of schools with orchestra programs in Texas and the U.S. research in such sites would carry implications for both their urban and suburban counterparts.

In addition to representing an overlooked schooling context, I chose an urban characteristic locale because of the intensity with which competition may be experienced in this setting. Researchers in both music education (Nussbaum, 2020; West, 2012) and general education have identified how accountability structures disproportionately impact low-income schools (Rooney, 2015; Valencia, 2000). As a result, teachers and students likely experience a tension from the contrast of proximities. As a low-income, high SOC campus, they face many of the same challenges as urban schools with resources (Costa-Giomi & Chappell, 2007), scheduling (Chappell, 2013) and testing (West, 2012); however, they also experience administrative and professional pressure to participate in competitive events with similar vigor as their district counterparts working in more affluent schools (Shaw, 2014; Nussbaum, 2020; O'Leary, 2019).

I opted to limit my participants to students from racially underrepresented groups based on the lack of inclusion of these voices within our field (Escalante, 2019) and the importance of presenting counterstories to interrupt hegemonic understandings (Alemán & Alemán, 2010; Milner, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Within the context of music education, "it is essential to understand counternarratives associated with culturally diverse and urban communities in an effort to inform future teaching and research practices" (Gerrard, 2018, pp. 146-147). At the same time, I was not interested in reducing individual experience into a collective

understanding, but instead illuminating the multiple realities possible within a single structure of music education.

Problem Statement

As the population of Asian, Black, and Latinx students continues to rise in the United States (Hussar et al., 2020), music education researchers consistently identify an underrepresentation of Black, Latinx, and Native American students within high school instrumental ensembles (Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019). School orchestra programs are overwhelmingly concentrated in suburban districts (Chappell & Nussbaum, 2019; Smith et al., 2018; Strietelmeier, 2019), which are becoming increasingly racially and economically diverse (Frey, 2018). However, research on student experience in orchestra is often positioned from a white, suburban middle-class perspective. Diversifying suburbs lie at the crossroads of race, racism, and whiteness and findings drawn from these settings can have implications for racial dynamics in all educational contexts (Diamond et al., 2021).

Similarly under-examined is the student perspective and experience of competition despite the ubiquity of competitive structures in music education. Critical race scholars identify meritocratic structures, such as competition, as purported race-neutral mechanisms that uphold racial hegemony (Au, 2016; Bell, 2005; Milner, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997). Additionally, music education researchers have found evidence that students of color may be discouraged by competitive environments in music education (Brewer, 2010; Lind, 1999; Lind & Butler, 2003; Gerrard, 2018). In the “highly competitive music education environment of Texas” (Tucker, 2020, p. 9), teachers and students may face even greater tensions surrounding competitive expectations. As such, I aim to examine the ways in which

underrepresented students of color discuss their high school orchestra experience with a particular interest on competitive structures.

Purpose

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to explore how racially underrepresented students perceive race within an urban characteristic high school orchestra program through the lens of critical race theory. Critical race theory is a tool to challenge dominant discourses and identify covert mechanisms perpetuating racial inequity (Calmore, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Milner, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). I developed a composite counter-story (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) to examine the racialized experience of school orchestra told from the perspective of students of color with a particular interest on competition.

Research Questions

(1) How do racially minoritized students perceive the role of racial identity in their lives and in the context of orchestra?

(2) How do racially minoritized students experience racial tensions in an urban characteristic high school? How are these manifested within the orchestra program?

(3) How does individual competition and comparison-based assessment shape racially minoritized students' orchestra experience?

(4) How do racially minoritized students ascribe meaning to their high school orchestra experiences?

Theoretical Framework

I have employed critical race theory (CRT) in both design and analysis in this study (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). A core tenet of CRT is to provide counterstories that represent

multiple realities (Alemán & Alemán 2010; Khalifa et al., 2013; Milner, 2007). By seeking student participants from historically underrepresented groups and researching in an urban characteristic orchestra program, these experiences serve as a counter-narrative to much of music education research and praxis that operates from a vantage of white hegemony (Hess, 2018). Additionally, acknowledging that race and racism are endemic in our society, I examine the unspoken and unacknowledged ways in which race shapes participants' experiences (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Milner, 2012).

Limitations

The primary limitations of this study stem from practical barriers to access. Based on district IRB protocol, the orchestra teacher facilitated recruitment by providing recruitment material to a subset of students meeting discussed criteria. As a result, the teacher may have selected students they felt would best reflect their program. Additionally, student participants may not have been as forthcoming in their responses knowing that their teacher may be able to identify them despite attempts at confidentiality. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, data collection was limited to virtual interview and focus group data without ability to partake in in-person interviews or field observations. Lastly, while generalizability is not an aim of this study, the exceptionality of the competitive music environment in Texas may limit the relevance of my findings.

Research Design Overview

Because I am examining the intersection of under-researched topics and populations in music education, I selected a qualitative approach. This approach was appropriate because the

emergent nature of qualitative study allows the researcher to pursue burgeoning and unforeseen avenues (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I selected an instrumental case study so that I may present a "rich and holistic account" of the phenomenon of student-level competition in the orchestra both from the experience of students and their teachers (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). By speaking to a variety of actors within this site, I hope to bring "attention to complexity and contextuality" to the issue of observation (Stake, 1995, p. 16).

I limited my representation to a single site involving both student and teacher participants. With this design, I was able to investigate the phenomenon of individual competition from multiple perspectives yet situated in context. This high school orchestra program represents a case within the broader phenomenon of competition in urban characteristic schools (Milner, 2012). I used a combination of criterion and maximum variation sampling in order to recruit and select participants (Patton, 2015). Data sources were primarily participant interviews and student focus group, with additional contextual information from public artifacts. Student interviews provided an in-depth representation of experiences in orchestra, competitive events, and perceptions of the role of race in such events while teacher interviews provided context for the student experience. The focus group interview served as a generative site in which students were able interrogate and contrast their collective experience. Lastly, I will use peer debriefing, triangulation, and member checks to establish trustworthiness of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015).

Chapters of the Document

In Chapter 1, I discussed my experiences that led to my interest in competition in music education and provided a rationale, purpose, and design summary for this proposed study. In

order to situate this study within existing literature, Chapter 2 explores related topics of the role of race in shaping educational experiences, access and equity in music education, experience of teachers and students in music competition, and factors impacting students from underrepresented racial/ethnic identities in music education. Chapter 3 details my plans for executing this proposed study, including theoretical frameworks, research site, and method. In Chapter 4, I provide a detailed description of the Pinewood setting, orchestra program, and participant portraits. Based on inductive analysis, I present thematic findings in Chapter 5. I close the document with a discussion situated in critical race theory, implications, and future research in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Within this literature review, I explore relevant literature for the purpose of situating this study in existing scholarship and developing rationale for the research problem. Due to the multifaceted nature of my research, I organize my review into four major sections: (a) race, (b) school inequity, (c) music education access, and (d) competition in music education. I begin this chapter by discussing theoretical approaches for understanding and examining racial differences in order to inform research design. In the following section, I examine the convergence of race and class in shaping educational access and inequality and how these are examined in educational research. I go on to share how access to music education is shaped by racial and class differences; within this topic, I explore how racial and class differences shape music student experience. Lastly, I discuss literature that pertains to music competition as is relevant to this research.

Introduction

Throughout the development of the educational system in the US, white Americans of European descent have been and remain the privileged group. White students are less likely to attend a high-poverty school than any other group (Spring, 2019) and achieve higher graduation rates than all minority groups except Asian Americans (NCES, 2020). Simultaneously, poverty is linked to lower test scores and decreased likelihood of high school graduation (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). African American, Latino American, Native American, and

subgroups of Asian American communities[4] all experience higher rates of poverty (KIDS COUNT Data Center, 2019) and residential segregation due to institutional discrimination in housing (Charles, 2003). As a result, members of these racial and ethnic groups frequently have access to inferior educational opportunities than their white counterparts.

The issues of inequitable educational access and opportunity are also reflected within music education. Even though approximately 20-25% of all high school students participate in a musical ensemble at some point, Black and Latinx[5] students are underrepresented within instrumental ensembles (Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019). Additionally, researchers have identified that schools with a higher population of minority and low-income students may have less financial and material resources (Costa-Giomi & Chappell, 2007). Despite growing acknowledgment of differences in student participation in music education along both racial and socioeconomic lines (Elpus & Abril 2011, 2019; Kinney 2008, 2010, 2019) research in music education often fails to directly examine the role of students racial/ethnic identity in their musical experiences. As a result, researchers have largely been left to speculate on the reasons that certain students are less likely to enroll and persist in traditional music education ensembles.

Researchers have also examined the relationship between school SES and a number of

[4] Prior to the Immigration Act of 1965, the U.S had steep quotas limiting immigrants from all Asian countries. As a result, the high influx of well-educated immigrants (from Indian subcontinent, China, Korea, and Japan) obscures the fact that Asian Pacific Islanders and refugee students have some of the lowest graduation rates (National Education Agency, 2019).

[5] Throughout this paper, I use Latinx as a gender-neutral term referring to people of Latin American descent. However, the term Hispanic remains more widely used by data-gathering agencies in the U.S. and in popular discourse. In this paper "Hispanic" appears when used by participants or referring specifically to a demographic category as collected by TEA, NCES, or the US Census Bureau.

competitive outcomes including marching band competition results (O'Leary, 2016; Stern, 2019), choir festival ratings (Dame, 2010), concert band festival ratings (Speer, 2012), and all-state ensemble membership (Bailey, 2018). Consistently, researchers have identified that schools with lower concentrations of low-income students perform more favorably in both individual and group competitions (Bailey, 2018; Bergee & McWhirther, 2005; Dame, 2010; O'Leary, 2016; Speer, 2012; Stern, 2019). However, music education scholars have yet to explicitly examine the relationship between student race and competition in music education.

Race and Research

The American Sociological Association (2003) depicts race as "a social concept that changes over time" (p. 4). While racial categories themselves vary over time and geography, the existence of discrimination based on racial categories has been constant in the United States. Yang (2000) defines ideological racism as a "system of beliefs that one racial group is biologically, intellectually, or culturally inferior or superior to another" (p. 145). This definition harkens to the dark history of 'scientific' justifications for a racial hierarchy, built on the belief that darker races possessed inferior intellectual, temperamental, and physical traits that were genetically inheritable (Alexander, 1962). Even though scientists have discredited this notion, these theories influenced racist and exclusionary policies that have lasting impacts today (Serwer, 2019).

Due to the variation in both conceptions of race itself and perspectives on how to approach examining race in empirical research, I begin this chapter by making explicit the racial understandings with which I approach this study. Rather than an exhaustive examination of all racial theories, I focus on those that pertain to the role of race in shaping a person's daily

experiences and educational opportunities, with particular interest on critical race theory, which I use as a central frame for this study. Next, I discuss racially and culturally affirming pedagogical practices to establish a basis for educational best practices in teaching students of color. Lastly, I close this section with an examination of the ways in which race is researched in music education. Embedded within subsequent sections of this review of literature, I will also address the role of race in shaping educational access and achievement.

Theories of Race and Racism

Omi & Winant (2015) identify race as a master category in our society, meaning that it has "profoundly shaped, continues to shape, the history, polity, and economic structure and culture of the United States" (p. 106). They use the term *racial projects* to refer to any action (large or small) that simultaneously shapes and reflects the ways in which racial meanings are embedded in society. From this description, public education itself is a racial project in which race groups are lived and reconstructed through social processes. As such, teachers have the ability to either reinscribe existing racial structures or explicitly address and combat racial inequality within the racial project of public education.

Critical race theory (CRT) was originally developed by legal scholars in the 1970s upon realizing that the progress of the civil rights era had stalled and researchers needed tools to examine and combat more subtle forms of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Following the introduction of critical race theory, many disciplines have adopted and adapted it for application in other fields to examine racial and intersectional oppressions, including the field education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995/2006; Milner, 2007). In the context of this study, I use CRT to inform both the design and epistemology of my research. Within this section, I explain

the central tenets of CRT and how they pertain to this research and then address methodological considerations implicated by a CRT epistemology.

One of the foundational and universal assumptions in critical race theory and subsequent adaptions is that racism is both ordinary and endemic (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). While many individuals in the United States would consider racism to be driven by individual beliefs—ideological racism (Yang, 2000)—CRT instead views racism as embedded within institutions (Alemán & Alemán, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This perspective maintains that "racism is permanent and understanding it is fundamental to understanding how all the structures are organized in the US" (Love, 2019, p. 136). By recognizing that racism is embedded in institutions, CRT scholars also believe that race is the central factor in explaining inequality (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995/2006).

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995/2006) were the first scholars to examine the potential for utilizing CRT in education research. They viewed race as undertheorized and recognized that CRT would be a useful tool to "uncover or decipher the social-structural and cultural significance of race in education" (p. 14). In order to explore the role of race and racism in education, critical race theory stresses the importance of narrative and counter-narrative. The importance of narrative stems from the perspective that "social reality is constructed by the formulation and the exchange of stories about individual situations" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995/2006, p. 21). In doing race research in education, a goal should be to disrupt what has been normalized and decenter the white experience (Love, 2019; Milner, 2007, Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Bonilla-Silva (2013) presents a framework for understanding post-Jim Crow racism in

America, which he coins color-blind racism. This color-blind ideology is built on the assumptions that racism is systemic and structural, while also appearing covert and supported by race-neutral arguments. However, this "new racism" is no less harmful and equally as successful at promoting anti-Blackness and ensuring a white racial dominance. Color-blind racism relies on four central frames:

1. *Abstract liberalism*: Derivative of European humanism ideology that promotes individualism, universalism, and egalitarianism.
2. *Naturalization*: Attitude that racial separation is a natural phenomenon; social preferences are part of human nature.
3. *Cultural racism*: People have different values and cultures that happen to fall along racial line.
4. *Minimization of race*: Civil-rights legislation eradicated racism, thus lack of economic or educational attainment is not a result of racism but instead individual shortcomings.

Previous research on race in education has uncovered the prevalence of color-blind ideology among teachers, parents, and even students in depicting the nature of racial differences in education (Akom, 2004; Escalante, 2019). As such, the four central frames of color-blind racism may be powerful tools in examining the role of race within the context of this study.

Extending on colorblindness, Akom (2004) developed the portmanteau *Ameritocracy* to refer to the prevailing investment in meritocracy within American society as a seemingly race-neutral tool for maintaining the racial status quo. The framework of Ameritocracy encompasses the unique ways in which race, class, and merit (understood as access to resources and privilege) interact in educational spaces to allow white people to "maintain racial privilege and educational advantage without claiming overt racial superiority" (p. 4). Akom (2008) further argues that the American education is a site of reproduction, but to label it as "cultural" or "social" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) obscures the role that the American education system

also plays in reproducing the racial hierarchy and collapses racial differences within a social class.

Bettina Love (2019) provides an overview of intersectional issue facing "dark children" in public education and the educational dispositions necessary to dismantle these oppressive structures, which she refers to as *abolitionist* teaching. Within this work, she introduces the concept of the "educational survival complex," explaining that schools only provide Black and brown students the bare minimum skills required for survival in society. Schools are characterized as structures for replication and a "training site for a life of exhaustion" (p. 27).

Based on these theories, I approach this research with the assumption that race is a social construction that has material impact to a person's access to opportunity (Delgado & Stancic, 2001). That modern racism is cloaked in race-neutral language, further challenging its identification and eradication (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). And, that schooling is a social institution designed to maintain the racial status quo through Ameritocracy (Akom, 2004) and the "educational survival complex" (Love, 2019, p. 27).

Conceptions of Race in the Music Classroom

Within the field of music education, a small, but growing group of scholars are addressing the ways in which the field centers whiteness and consider pedagogical approaches appropriate for providing more racially affirming instruction. Researchers have examined issues of colonization (Bradley, 2006) and white hegemony embedded in the very fabric of music education (Hess, 2017, 2018). Bradley (2006) suggested "the time is long overdue for us to engage in conversations that acknowledge the ways in which music and our discourses about music are racially coded" (p. 23).

Juliet Hess (2013, 2017) employed an *anti-oppression framework*, which combined anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and anti-racist feminism lenses to examine music teachers' social justice philosophy and practice. In adopting the three frames simultaneously, the framework has the potential to "formulate counterhegemonic education with a focus on agency, resistance, and action (Hess, 2013, p. 22). In speaking with teachers, Hess (2017) found that even though all teachers actively decentered Western traditions, they still encountered "stumbling blocks" that reinscribed white hegemony.

Butler et al. (2007) proposed a conceptual model for the interplay of race, ethnicity, and culture in music teaching and learning. The authors suggest that teachers need to become culturally responsive and be able to better understand "how their own cultural backgrounds and ethnic identities influence their attitudes about other cultural groups" (Butler et al., 2007, p. 245). Building on the development of the conceptual model, co-authors Lind and McKoy (2016) explored the potential application of culturally responsive teaching in music education. They warn against adhering strictly to traditional models and suggest that providing "viable paths to music study that align more closely to interests outside of school" could result in a revitalization and increased participation (p. 140).

Race-Conscious Pedagogies

Based on a growing body of research with Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers, educational scholars have identified best practices for teaching racially marginalized children (Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Love, 2019). Even though these academics have unique lines of scholarship with varied perspectives on educating students of color, they all share some common principles. Chief among these shared beliefs is the

importance of developing community within the classroom and the need to communicate to students a belief in their potential. Additionally, Gay (2010) addressed the nature of caring in developing a culturally responsive classroom. I chose to focus on these tenets because of the potential for intra-ensemble competition to interfere with establishing these pedagogical practices.

Ladson-Billings (2009) characterizes a typical classroom as a setting in which "success means doing better than others"(p. 59). However, rather than investing in an individualistic environment, "culturally relevant teaching advocates the kind of cooperation that leads students to believe they cannot be successful without getting help from others or without being helpful to others" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 76). Both Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2010) discuss the role of authentic collaboration in developing the sense of community within the classroom.

Inherent in developing a sense of community within the classroom is the need to express to students a deep care for their well-being and commitment to their success. Caring teachers are "intolerant of failure" (Gay, 2010, p. 47) thus a structure in which certain students must succeed over others (peer competition) would be seen as incompatible with caring and culturally responsive teaching. Instead, teachers demonstrate their care for students through high-expectations and actions that communicate their belief in a students' ability to be successful (Gay, 2010).

Scholars go to lengths to delineate between authentic caring and other affectations that may inadvertently reinforce a deficit perspective (Gay, 2010; Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Rojas & Liou, 2017). Matias and Zembylas (2014) warn against the ways in which (white) teachers

invoke pity and a passive care for their students in a way that projects racial disgust. While Rojas and Liou (2017) suggest that sympathy derived from pity may inadvertently reinforce to students the belief that learning is unattainable to them. Teachers who "fail to demand accountability for high-level performance from ethnically diverse students…are abdicating their professional responsibilities" (Gay, 2010, p. 48).

Race and Class in Education

In a speech to the *Asian and Latino Coalition* in 2019, then-presidential-nominee, Joe Biden stated "poor kids are just as bright as white kids." Biden's *Freudian slip* on the topic of equitable educational opportunities is reflective of the common conflation of race and class within both American society and educational discourse. Within the sociological community, scholars debate whether race or class play a larger role in shaping educational, housing, and economic opportunity within this country (Charles, 2003; Denton & Massey, 1993; Wilson, 1978/2012, 2011). Within education, this conflation takes the form of using coded language such as 'urban' or 'diverse' to refer to any school that struggles academically (Milner, 2012). Even though race and class are not intrinsically linked, census data confirm a relationship between the two, in which people of color are more likely to be living in poverty than whites (Charles, 2003) and non-white school children are more likely to be eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL) (Hussar et al., 2020). Both race and class interact to shape experience and opportunity within the United States. As a result, it is necessary to explore the differences in educational access across both racial and economic lines simultaneously in order to illustrate the compounding roles they play in (in)equity and opportunity. In the following section, I explain the lingering history of school segregation in shaping current inequity and

describe the common measurements and mechanisms through which researchers examine the landscape of education.

School Segregation and Lasting Inequality

Despite popular belief that the landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* blazed the path for educational equality in America, researchers consistently find that schools are just as racially segregated today as they ever were (Garcia, 2020; Hussar et al., 2020). Derrick Bell (2005), civil rights legal scholar, reflects that the *Brown* decision removed legal barriers to educational inequality and inequity without actually providing any structures to enforce changes or ensure equal opportunity. In this way, *Brown* was ultimately good for white Americans because it promoted a false impression that "the path to progress was clear" and allowed for a wholesale re-commitment to meritocracy in education (Bell, 2005, p. 1060). Failure to attain educational gains was no longer an issue of inadequate or unequal access, and thus could be blamed on lack of effort and superior ability, reinscribing a racial hierarchy that favored whites.

Because of widespread residential segregation within this country following the passing of the *Brown* decision, schools were slow to integrate and many lawmakers were required by court rulings to adopt policies that enforced school integration (Epperson, 2008). In order to avoid having their students bused to non-neighborhood schools within the same district, many white families moved out of cities with large minority populations and into suburbs (Massey & Denton, 1993). Through the action of white flight throughout the second half of the 20th century, racial residential segregation became the mechanism through which urban centers developed substantial concentrations of poverty (Massey, 1990). As a result of higher poverty

rates among Black and Brown individuals, racially segregated minority neighborhoods experienced a higher concentration of poverty, impacting community access to education, public services, housing, and jobs.

The reliance on property taxes for educational funding substantially contributes to educational inequality especially when considered alongside the disproportionality in poverty and segregation (Kozol, 1991/2012, Isensee, 2016). Latinx and African American communities continue to experience higher levels of residential segregation than aggregate Asian or European Americans groups (Massey, Roswell, & Domina, 2009). The same study also identified that segregation based on income-level continues to rise. The concentration of wealth through residential segregation results in disproportionate funding in public schooling. As a result, low-income students of all groups (but especially racial and ethnic minority groups) are more likely to attend less-integrated, lower-resourced schools despite a higher concentration of need. The system of property-based school funding ensures that poor children will remain so because their schools do not have adequate resources to prepare them to attain social and economic mobility. (Love, 2019, p. 17)

Jonathan Kozol (1991/2012) explored the tangible ways in which residential segregation and white flight led to “savage inequalities” in urban schools. Kozol discussed how white families hoarded resources (linked to property values and personal contributions) within their communities, creating a sharp contrast in educational opportunity for schools separated only by a few miles. While this level of contrast persists within urban school districts, many of the areas in close proximity to urban areas are beginning to experience *suburban minoritization* (Frey, 2000, 2018). White population growth is shrinking within the U.S. overall, and many

white families are moving into outer suburbs and exurbs—semi-rural areas geographically located beyond suburbs immediately surrounding metropolitan areas. At the same time populations of color are growing at faster rates and Black families are getting priced out of historically Black metropolitan neighborhoods (Frey, 2018). By 2010, white people accounted for 65% of the combined population in suburbs of the 100 largest metropolitan areas; this is in contrast to 81% two decades earlier (Frey, 2018). As a result of continued economic strain, residents of suburban areas are increasingly experiencing fiscal stress, with this disproportionately skewed for Black and Hispanic suburban residents (Institute on Race and Poverty, 2006). Such residential trends result in a shifting landscape for suburban schools and their resources.

Within the state of Texas, people of Hispanic/Latinx identity accounted for 37.6% of the population in the 2010 census and are projected to exceed the non-Hispanic white population by 2022 (Texas Demographic Center, 2019). This same report identified trends of rapid suburban population growth, which is expected to continue and largely be fueled by increasing Asian and Hispanic populations, aligning with Frey's (2018) national reports. These same trends are reflected in the Texas schooling population. By 2013, Hispanic students enrolled in public schools accounted for just over 50% of all public-school students in Texas and the proportion of all minority groups has continued to rise (TEA, 2014). As of the 19-20 school year, the collective population of African American, Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial students totaled 72.5% of the state's public-school population and 60.2% of all students were identified as economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2020a). In a closer examination of the intersection of race and SES within this report, approximately 75% of all Hispanic and African American students in Texas public

schools were classified as economically disadvantaged, whereas only 30% of white students were in this category, suggesting that poverty is highly concentrated in racial minority groups in Texas.

Poverty, SES, and FRPL

The National Center for Educational Statistics utilizes the enrollment of students in the federal Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program (FRPL) as a proxy for student income status, wherein FRPL eligible students are considered low-income (NCES, 2020). Schools are divided into four categories based on percentage of FRPL student enrollment, labelled as the following categories: high poverty, mid-high poverty, mid-low poverty, and low poverty. The Texas Education Agency similarly uses FRPL as a proxy for student socio-economic status and use this rate to determine the concentration of *Economically Disadvantaged* students in a school (TEA, 2020b).

As part of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, lawmakers introduced special provisions to provide additional federal funding for school with higher concentrations of low-income students. Schools with a threshold of 40% low-income students are eligible for Title I funds that can be used "to operate schoolwide programs that serve all children in the school in order to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students" (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). This 'Title I' status, often indicates a congruence of those affected by marginalization in race/ethnicity and class due to the concentration of poverty among minority populations I discussed previously. Black, Latinx, and American Indian students are five times more likely than white students to attend a high poverty school with nearly three-quarters of all Black and Latinx students attending schools that have more than 50% concentration of student

eligible for FRPL (Hussar et al., 2020). Within Texas, these numbers are similar with approximately 65% of the state's student population enrolled in either schools or programming that receive Title I funding for the last 10 years. Only 46% of all white students are enrolled in Title I programs, in contrast to the 70% of African American students and 78% of Hispanic students (TEA, 2020a).

Educational researchers heavily utilize FRPL enrollment as an indicator of both individual student and school-level socioeconomic status (Domina et al., 2018). However, scholars continue to debate the validity of using FRPL as a proxy for economic disadvantage (Harwell & LaBeau, 2010), with researchers finding an inconsistent relationship between FRPL status and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) household income status (Domina et al., 2018) or census poverty status (Cruse & Powers, 2006). Despite such evidence, researchers in the field of music education widely adopt student FRPL as a proxy for socioeconomic status (Kinney, 2008, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2006; Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019).

Locales

NCES classifies school locales into 4 broad categories (urban, suburban, town, or rural) based on US Census definitions and these can be further broken into a total of 12 sub-categories depending on a combination of size and proximity criteria (Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates, n.d.). However, TEA divides schools into nine different categories which they developed using a combination of geographic proximity, county population, and district enrollment (TEA, 2020c). Interestingly, the *Major Urban* designation by TEA is the only category to specify a threshold for economically disadvantaged students—at least 35% of students. Thus, in the state of Texas, urban schooling is categorically linked to a higher

concentration of low-income students. Until 2017-2018, TEA included their classifications alone in district reports but now report TEA district type alongside NCES designation (TEA, 2020d).

Milner (2012), recognizing the variation among "urban" schools, suggested that educational researchers adopt a framework to further classify schools in various urban environments. Within educational research and conversations with teachers, he also observed "urban" being employed as a deficit-oriented moniker to describe struggling schools in any setting. Within his proposed conceptual framework, Milner developed the categories of *urban intensive*, *urban emergent,* and *urban characteristic.* The former two categories refer to schools in large metropolitan areas and second-tier large cities, respectively, that face issues of poverty and housing shortages as a result of urban proximity. *Urban characteristic* schools are not located within large cities, but "may be starting to experience some of the challenges that are sometimes associated with urban school contexts" (p. 559).

Within music education, there is little research that has attempted to take such a nuanced look at schools that do not fit neatly into the traditional categories of urban, rural, or suburban. In fact, among Texas music educators, school types are practically viewed dichotomously, with suburban serving as the assumed default and urban and rural being a collective category of schools facing "challenges"[6] (TMEA, 2020). However, some music education researchers have begun to shed light on the landscape of music education within schools that do not fit into these categories. Bruenger (2009), in asking recent music education graduates about the types of schools in which they sought employment, utilized the term

[6] When proposing a presentation for the TMEA convention, you can select from a number of topics to categorize this proposal. One such category is "Urban and Rural Challenges," functioning as a catchall topic for any presentation that addresses issues faced as a result of a context beyond the suburban norm.

midurban to refer to a "school run by a large suburban school district but geographically located on the fringe of an urban district" (p. 37). More recently, Gerrard (2021) adopted Milner's (2012) *urban characteristic* label when examining a middle school band program within a predominantly Latinx school. Coincidentally, both of these studies were conducted within Texas, suggesting that *urban characteristic* is indeed a salient category of schools in need of examination.

Landscape of Music Education

Music education researchers have identified disparities in access to music instruction, resources available for music instruction, and differences in enrollment along the lines of both race and economic status. Despite growth in overall access to music education, researchers have identified that this growth is not consistent along racial and economic lines (Salvador & Allegood, 2014) and school music programs have uneven access to material and financial resources (Costa-Giomi & Chappell, 2013; Fermanich, 2011; Elpus & Grise, 2019). Additionally, researchers have identified both race and economic status as factors relevant to instrumental ensemble enrollment and retention (Kinney, 2010, 2019; Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019). Within this section, I examine how access, resources, and enrollment within music education are shaped by differences in student race and class.

Access to Music Education

A study by the National Center for Educational Statistics (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012) identified expanded access to music education across the nation from 2000-2010. Schools were divided into four categories of "poverty concentration" based on percentage of students

receiving FRPL and findings were compared to data from the 1999-2000 school year. For elementary students, music instruction was deemed as "almost universally available" in 2010, with an estimated 94% of elementary schools providing music instruction nationwide (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012, p. 5). Even though secondary music education was identified as available at 91% of all schools in 2010, access had increased drastically among schools with the lowest student FRPL rates but declined in the two categories with >50% FRPL. Furthermore, schools were much less likely to offer five or more different music courses as FRPL rates increased.

Salvador and Allegood (2014) further nuanced the NCES findings by exploring access to music instruction specifically in high-poverty, non-white schools in Washington D. C. and Detroit. Within their analysis, Salvador and Allegood found that structural access to music education declined within high non-white schools, with only 40-60% of such schools in Detroit offering music instruction. However, rapid growth in schools with a majority white student population—often concentrated in suburban areas—created an illusion of national growth in music education.

Abril & Gault (2008) surveyed over 500 secondary principals to examine the profile of music course offerings and principals' perceptions of the curriculum content and educational goals of the music program. Band and choir were offered in a substantial majority of schools (93% and 88%, respectively), while orchestra was offered only at 42% of schools; this rate was lower than a jazz/rock ensemble (55%). Additionally, there was a difference found based on SES, with the most diverse course offerings in the highest SES schools and decreasing correspondingly (low SES schools were those with 50% or more FRL). Budgeting, scheduling, and standardized tests were perceived to negatively impact music programs in 25% of schools

but SES or location were not associated with these differences. Findings also demonstrate that large performing ensembles still dominate musical course offerings.

Contributing to the understanding of access, Chappell (2013) identified that within a Texas school district students in both Title I and non-Title I campuses had similar fine arts elective courses available, but that students at the Title I schools only had room for one elective in the 6th grade, while students at non-Title I schools had 2-3. Furthermore, students across the district were required to enroll in remediation courses in the 7th grade following failure of a state test in the previous year. This policy more heavily impacted students in Title I schools, where more students struggled academically, resulting in lower music retention rates.

West (2010) addressed impacts to music education as a result of No Child Left Behind through a study with 10 Michigan music teachers. Teachers perceived that music received "second class" treatment in comparison to tested subject and this disparity was more noticeable on campuses that had not met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goals. Scheduling challenges and pull outs were both mentioned as an outcome of more aggressive testing preparation. Teachers on these underperforming campuses found their roles shifting to support the broader "mission" of the campus. Excellent playing was no longer the primary goal and teachers often had to take on extra-musical roles. While not addressed directly in this study, schools that struggle academically are more likely to have a higher concentration of student eligible for FRPL and racial/ethnic minority (Domina et al., 2018). Thus, it is likely that teachers at the "struggling" campuses and experience the largest disruptions to music instruction are teaching students from marginalized backgrounds.

Disparities in Resources

In addition to identified inequity in terms of access to music instruction, researchers have consistently identified differences in access to resources. Campuses within the same school district experience drastic differences in financial and material resources for music classes as well as parental support. Costa-Giomi and Chappell (2007) examined band programs in one Texas urban school district and found significant differences in number of students in lessons, general support of parents, parents involved in the booster club, program fees, access to external funds, fundraising revenue, financial aid for students, and technical resources depending on school economic status and minority student representation. Consistent with previous research, schools with fewer low-income and minority students had access to more material resources and parent support than their counterparts.

Elpus and Grise (2019) identified N=5,575 music booster clubs registered with the IRS in 2015 and examined the reported revenue. Texas has the largest number of IRS-registered booster clubs, and exceeded the next closest state, California, by 250. Researchers also found that zip codes with a booster club had considerably higher household income than the national average and ANOVA suggested a strong relationship between household income and booster revenue. Per tax law, the majority of booster clubs (n=3,503) did not have to report their income to the IRS since they earned less than $50,000.

Fermanich (2011) examined the music budgeting in one suburban school district. He found that no Title I funds were used for music and about 85% of budgeting for music was spent on teacher salaries. The remaining discretionary budget came mostly from participation fees and fundraising, which varied greatly across campuses in the district. Interviews with

school staff revealed that teachers and principals felt program quality would suffer without access to supplemental funding through fundraising and fees. While researchers have identified external funding as commonplace for school music programs (Elpus & Grise, 2019; Fermanich, 2011), some researchers question the ethicality of conducting individual student fundraisers within low-income schools (Skousen & Domangue, 2020).

Enrollment Trends in Music Education

Researchers have identified that approximately 1 in 5 students participate in ensemble-based music education course for at least one year during high school (Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019). Most of these students are enrolled in either band or choir ensembles, with only about 2% of all high school students ever participating in a string orchestra ensemble (Elpus & Abril, 2019). However, within this relatively small subsection of the high school population, researchers have observed that instrumental ensembles in particular do not always reflect the student population, with the overall enrollment in these courses having a higher concentration of white and more affluent students (Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019; Kinney, 2010, 2019). Unlike choir participation, band and orchestra programs at the high school level require more financial commitment and a continuity of involvement beginning prior to high school. Due the comparatively small portion of orchestral enrollment, researchers have less frequently examined the topic of enrollment and retention of school orchestra programs in isolation. As a result, I discuss research on enrollment trends in all instrumental contexts.

Utilizing data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS) gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Elpus and Abril (2011) sought to develop a profile of high school students involved in campus music programs. From this meta-analysis,

they identified that white students were proportionally overrepresented in instrumental music in comparison to the national population of high school students, while Black and Hispanic students were underrepresented. Elpus and Abril also found a significant difference along economic lines, with students from the lower two income quartiles underrepresented in instrumental music courses.

In a follow-up study, Elpus and Abril (2019) used high school transcript data from the graduating class of 2013, which allowed them to explore enrollment trends along ensemble lines. Findings reaffirmed that Black and Latinx students were proportionally underrepresented in instrumental ensembles. Confirming anecdotal knowledge, Elpus and Abril found that students who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander were substantially overrepresented in orchestra ensembles. Another important finding was that students who participated in high school choir were representative of the national student population, suggesting that Black and Latinx students, as well as those from a lower-income family, may face barriers participating in instrumental ensembles.

Contrasting this aggregated depiction of music education, Chappell (2013) examined racial/ethnic enrollment in instrumental music ensembles from a campus-level within a single school district. In looking at middle school enrollment across a large, urban district in Texas, she found that ensemble enrollment aligned with the dominant population. On campuses in which Latinx students were the dominant population, they were overrepresented within the instrumental music ensembles. While this difference could be explained by the fact that Texas has a proportionally much larger population of Latinx students (TEA, 2020a), it may also suggest that campus-based differences other than demographics may play a larger role in determining

student enrollment.

In a series of three studies, Kinney (2008, 2010, 2019) looked at a number of student factors and their relationship to enrollment and retention in music ensembles. In the second study, Kinney (2010) examined the 6th and 8th grade populations of two schools in a midwestern metropolitan area that were identified as "in need of improvement." Student ethnicity was treated as dichotomous, with 67% of participants being nonminority. While academic success was the most salient nonmusical factor to predict initial enrollment, gender, SES, and family status were the only significant predictors of retention; students with high SES or two-guardian household were twice as likely to be in band in eighth grade. Kinney hypothesized that even though instruments may be provided to ease financial burden, it is the additional expenses of trips, attire, and supplies that impact retention of low SES students. The finding of family structure is important since it has not been reported on previously and suggests that students in single-parent homes may have difficulty meeting outside of school commitments associated with band making them less likely to both enroll and remain. Kinney did not find student ethnicity to be a significant predictor for enrollment or retention.

In a follow-up study, Kinney (2019) broadened the scope to include a high school cohort and examined all major ensemble offerings: band, choir, and strings. Each grade level cohort reflected all 6th, 8th, and 10th grade students in the urban district, examining data from nearly 36,000 students. Enrollment in strings was consistently the lowest of the three music offerings, and the two instrumental classes saw attrition in the older cohorts while choir remained stable. Even though student SES level was not a predictor for string enrollment at any grade level, higher SES did predict band student enrollment in both 6th and 8th grade. Asian students were

significantly more likely to enroll in 6th grade strings and Black students significantly less likely to participate by 10th grade. In 8th and 10th grade, female students were more than 2 times more likely to enroll in strings. Kinney identified that choir classes had a more representative proportion of low- and high-SES students than instrumental classes at all grade levels. Consistent with Elpus and Abril (2011), Kinney found a disproportionately lower enrollment of Black and Hispanic students in instrumental music classes.

Competition in Music Education

The history of instrumental music education in the United States is entangled with the development of musical competitions (Holtz, 1962; Humphreys, 1989). Similarly, scholars within the field of music education have been debating the value of competition since its inception (Bedichek, 1956; Chenoweth, 1947; Hash, 2016). Many scholars have continued to provide critical examinations of the nature of competition (Abramo, 2017; Austin, 1990; Forbes, 1994; Miller, 1994; Powell, in press), but far fewer have provided nuanced research on perspectives of competition. Much of the extant research has examined the nature of adjudication in music education, some in hopes of improving adjudication practices (Howard, 2012; Lattimer et al., 2010; Pope & Barnes, 2015; Springer & Bradley, 2018; Zdzinski & Barnes, 2002) and others wishing to challenge the role of competition by demonstrating subjectivity (Hash, 2012, 2013a). However, scholars have also become increasingly interested in exploring teacher and student perspectives of competition, with considerably more examples in the former category. In this section I will provide an overview of the relevant literature on competition in music education in the following categories: brief history competition in music education, primary critiques, non-musical influences of competitive outcomes, teacher perceptions of competition, and student

perceptions of competition.

History of Competition in Music Education

> [Contests] resemble those developed over eighty-five years ago and might not fully support educators attempting to teach music as a curricular discipline, focus on individual musicianship, or incorporate the diverse learning called for in state and national standards. (Hash, 2016, p. 398)

When instrumental music instruction began entering into public schools, it was based on the orchestral model and out of a need for "homegrown" musicians to fill the rapidly expanding network of professional symphonies (Ritsema, 1972). However, by the late 1920s, instruction in band had taken a foothold in schools and rapidly began to surpass the orchestra programs. The school band model is rooted in the tradition of community bands that formed in the late 19th century (Floyd & Coachman, 1999; Humphreys, 1989). As these ensembles began to wane, instrument manufacturers sought to develop a new market and organized school band competitions with cash prizes, the first taking place in Chicago in 1923 (Holtz, 1962). It was not long before professional music education organizations took over the leadership of such competitions and they expanded to school orchestras and choirs (Hash, 2016). The National School Orchestra Contest began in 1929 and first national solo & ensemble contest for orchestra instruments took place two years later in Cleveland, Ohio. In many ways, the enthusiasm for these contests and competitions helped to encourage the rapid expansion of instrumental music instruction in public schools (Humphreys, 1989). During World War II, contests at the national level were suspended due to nationwide travel restrictions, leading many state and local organizations to create their own events; school music competition has largely remained a state-run endeavor since (Hash, 2016). Since the inception of these initial

festivals, music competitions continued to expand in both volume and variety (Cline, 1982a, 1982b).

Critical Perspectives of Competition

Competition remains a popular topic in music education, in large part due to the pervasiveness of the practice. Articles have appeared frequently in the form of practitioner and trade publications (Austin, 1990; Forbes, 1994; Miller, 1994; Mitchell, 2010) as well as philosophical scholarship (Abramo, 2017; Powell, in press; Tan, 2017). Many of these discussions are largely critical of competition and question the educational value; even contributions that promote competition also acknowledge the problematic aspects (Berenson, 2008; Buyer, 2005). For the most part, these conversations focus on large ensemble competition with little commentary on student-level competition or student perspective. The primary critiques of competition focus on the over-emphasis of performance and conformity to a narrow standard.

One of the primary concerns with large-ensemble adjudication pertains to the ways in which such events emphasize only a narrow aspect of music teaching and learning—the performance. As a result, "education appears to be a serendipitous by-product, rather than a primary goal, for many teachers and students who cling to contest outcomes for social status or material rewards" (Austin, 1990, p. 22). Teachers may also spend an abundant amount of time focusing on these public products, to the detriment of other curricular content, due to their perceived value for advocacy and support (Allsup, 2012). Another risk lies in the concern that teachers may "cut corners" to achieve desirable outcomes. Austin (1990) noted the potential for teachers to cater to their best performing students, leaving those who are less advanced in

a cycle of not progressing.

Joseph Abramo (2017) utilized Marxist theories in order to further explore this emphasis on performance. Educational trends have led to the transformation of learning into products that may be easily assessed for the sake of tracking progress. Music education has addressed this problem by relying almost exclusively on performance to assess learning. The inherent problem with this system is that we render the labor that went into developing these performances irrelevant because their "market" value is derived from a snap-shot performance. With the singular emphasis on outcome, teachers are incentivized to alter how they teach for the sake of competition preparation. From this perspective, not only do competitions eliminate the relevance of individual context but strive to conceal learning—despite their role as a vehicle to assess learning.

Given that evaluation systems align with Western art music standards by providing guidelines on instrumentation and repertoire (Hash, 2016), large-ensemble competitions also promote conformity among musical ensembles. In this way, "evaluation practices proudly influence the kinds of musical activities which are seen as important and worthy of study. These activities in turn determine which students are successful in music education" (Mitchell, 2010, p. 41). Kratus (2019) characterizes the traditional school music ensemble as a medium to develop *semiprofessional* musicians "adhering to extrinsic standards established by curricula and teachers" (p. 32). Kratus directly suggests that competition is one of the main causes that leads school music programs to shift priorities away from participatory music-making. Competitive aspirations serve to limit the flexibility in instrumentation and repertoire, "[fitting] the students to the music" rather than the other way around (p. 33).

Escalante (2019) addressed how the conformity of competitions relates to racial hegemony in music education. Escalante asserts that the "universal" norms of music education are informed by whiteness, and competition was identified by teacher participants as one such hegemonic practices music education. Within his conclusion, Escalante challenges the ideological assumption that "successful" music programs participate in judged, musical competitions in which they perform Western Classical music, and questions what a music classroom may look like that centers itself around serving students' musical lives outside of school.

Bridging all concerns, Powell (in press) examined the ideological nature of competition in music education. In this analysis, competition is the arbiter of student learning, musical achievement, and professional success resulting in a "one-dimensional practice" of music education. Additionally, it has become a focal point for music advocacy efforts, enhancing the ideological relationship. Due to the level of influence competition has over instructional decision-making, it functions to severely limit teacher agency. Unfortunately, the barriers to challenge the structure are steep, with the fear of diminished economic support of programs and the self-replicating nature of the professional organizations that maintain these systems.

Reinforcing this perspective, Vogt Williams (2018), a band teacher in Texas, wrote a brief essay titled "Thank You for All the 2s." In this article, Vogt Williams claimed "those three [contest] pieces demonstrate everything you hold important in your teaching" (p. 14). Additionally, she acknowledged the tremendous amount of professional pressure to receive and promote positive contest outcomes, while also rationalizing the value of being unsuccessful for the sake of improving. Not only do these comments assume validity in UIL as a

measurement for music teaching and learning, but they also place blame on teachers who "make excuses for why their students cannot accurately perform the skills mentioned on [the] critique sheet" (p.14).

Non-Musical Influences on Competitive Outcomes

A substantial body of research suggests that non-musical factors impact the outcome of adjudicated results in music education. Adjudicator bias has been identified in individual and large ensemble settings. In some cases, researchers have linked variability in scoring to attire and deportment (Howard, 2012) or conductor expressivity (Morrison et al., 2009). Springer & Bradley (2018) also found substantial variability in the ratings of concert bands, with several instances of adjudicator deviation. However, numerous analyses of scoring trends have demonstrated a relationship with student income level and competitive outcomes.

In a research of choral programs in Texas, Dame (2010) found a strong negative correlation between school SES level and ratings in both concert and sight-reading components. However, Dame identified considerable variability in scores among all regions, ensemble levels, and SES levels, suggesting that SES is not the sole cause of score variation. In a similar study, Speer (2012) analyzed scores of bands (n=173) in one geographical region of Texas with a wide variety of SES between schools. For the analysis, Speer categorized schools based on SES into four groups using campus rates of student FRPL status and performed comparisons among all bands, middle school, high school, Varsity, and non-varsity ensembles. At both the aggregate level and within sub-groups, Speer identified a consistent trend of higher scores for schools with lower population of students with FRL status. For most comparisons, the only significant difference was between the lowest SES category and the highest two groups. The difference

among ratings was most pronounced within the middle school ensembles.

O'Leary (2016) examined community and school characteristics of finalists in the Bands of America (BOA) Grand National Championships from 2001-2013. Consistent with previous research, all schools had enrollments larger than their state average and household incomes that were higher than state averages (by an average of 42%). This also meant that the schools had far fewer students eligible for FRPL. O'Leary did not find a significant difference between the racial demographics of individual schools and their respective state averages; however, the data does not reflect the actual demographic make-up of the bands within these schools.

Stern (2021) more explicitly examined the relationship of school SES status with rankings of the BOA San Antonio Super Regional competition in 2017. Even though the SES data is reflective of the school as a whole (and not necessarily the band program), Stern found that differences in campus SES explained 43.2% of variance seen in rankings and the bands named as finalists had a much smaller variance in SES than those band that did not. All but one of the bands participating in this event were from Texas, and when compared to O'Leary's (2016) study, the top-ranking bands in Texas were more uniformly from schools with very low levels of students receiving FRL (only an average of 13%) suggesting Texas marching competition may be more economically stratified than the country at large (Stern, 2021).

In an examination of All-State band and choir results in Texas, Bailey (2018) identified that students from the lowest designation of SES schools were the least represented consistently from 2005-2015. Over the course of this time, aggregate representation of students from low-SES schools remained between 9-13% of total All-State membership, while placement of students from middle-SES schools has risen. It is important to note that students

were classified into SES categories based on the percentage of student FRPL enrollment at their school and not reflective of individual student SES status, meaning that the All-State students could have had an individual SES status that was not congruent with their campus designation. Additionally, it is likely that this trend is even more extreme in the context of orchestra All-State since ensemble membership selection is not tied to geographical regions of the state.

Such studies are reminiscent of research in general education that has identified "achievement gaps" on standardized testing based on student SES and race (Bali & Alvarez, 2004; Valencia, 2000). As previously explored, race and poverty are linked in the United States and often associated with poorer educational opportunities. With this in mind, it is likely that low-SES programs identified in research of Texas competitions also had a higher representation of students of color. However, research on the topic of race in music education is limited and no research has explicitly examined the relationship between race and participation in music competitions.

Teacher Perspectives of Competition

In a phenomenological examination of competition in high school bands, O'Leary (2019) sought to describe possible manifestations and qualities of the experience of being in competition from the perspective of both teachers and former band students. O'Leary identified three primary themes: tension, planning and preparation, and dealing with results. The theme of tension encompasses the ways in which directors would simultaneously deemphasize the role of competition yet act in ways that indicated significant importance of the results. Tension also played out in the concern over competition being a powerful motivator but concerns of it becoming the sole focus of instruction. However, all participants

felt the motivational benefits outweighed their concerns. The final theme, results, discusses the ways in which competition results live beyond the context of the competition themselves. Results carry a "simplicity and efficiency" (pp. 53) that is convenient for advocacy, evaluation, and comparison.

Through a case study involving music teachers and campus administrators in Kansas, Rawlings (2019) looked at the perceived benefits and challenges associated with large-ensemble adjudicated events. Teachers found logistics, such as class coverage, transportation, and the financial obligations associated with competitions to be burdensome; however, they considered the process of preparation to be a valuable experience for students, especially the practice of bringing in outside clinicians. Teachers also mentioned that they utilized the adjudication rubric to inform their teaching throughout the school year.

In examining the work-life balance of band directors with competitive marching band programs, Shaw (2014) found that teachers experienced heightened stress due to internal and external pressures. Consistently, both administrators and parents exerted the expectation for these directors to not only maintain but surpass the established competitive commitments of the program. Furthermore, some directors linked their own personal and professional identity to the success of their program, intensifying the pressure to perform.

Tucker (2020) investigated teacher agency within the "highly competitive music education environment" of Texas through an instrumental case study of band directors. Through her analysis, Tucker uncovered a common set of teaching practices that participants believed others expected of them or found necessary for competitive success; participants expended a great deal of energy and resources to incorporate these into their programs.

Additionally, Tucker identified the powerful influence of adjudicated events on teachers' professional identities with participants using "intense emotional language" to convey how they felt when were not successful. Teachers felt that colleagues and administrators used scores to define their worth as teachers.

Against the backdrop of the highly competitive environment in Texas, I examined how instrumental music teachers in Title I schools navigated the high-stakes policy of an adjudicated large-ensemble contest within and beyond their classrooms (Nussbaum, 2020). In the context of this research, UIL C&SR serves as an extreme exemplar of competition as a form of standardization within music education. Findings suggest that teachers working in Title I contexts experience unique challenges in preparing for and succeeding in such events due to the intersection of campus-based challenges and contest policy. Additionally, I found that music teachers experienced similar narrowing of content and heightened stress as their general education counterparts do within accountability structures.

In one of the few studies on the topic of individual competition, Myers (2018) surveyed high school band directors about their attitudes towards solo & ensemble contests. The majority of participants had participated in solo & ensemble events in high school themselves and these directors reported more strongly on the importance of such events and willing to provide class time for students to prepare. Myers also found a regional effect, in which teachers in the Southwest and North Central United States reported more favorably on the benefit and importance of solo & ensemble. Additionally, this group of teachers had a more positive perspective of the format and organization of the events. The noticeable regional contrast could be indicative of a stronger tradition of competition within these areas of the country.

Student Perception of Competition

Within the music education literature, there is limited research that directly examines student perceptions of competition, either at an ensemble level or individual competition. Among the limited sources, students seem to mostly enjoy large ensemble competition, but researchers have also identified instances in which students are discouraged by peer-to-peer competition. Additionally, numerous researchers who sought to learn about the experiences of racial minority students in music education uncovered an incidental role of competition in shaping this experience (Brewer, 2010; Escalante, 2019; Gerrard, 2018; Lind, 1999; Lind & Butler, 2003). This section represents an overview of student perspectives of competition in music education.

Several studies have utilized surveys to measure student perspectives on large-ensemble competition, often presenting a generalized view. Gouzouasis and Henderson (2012) interviewed over 500 high school band students about their perceptions of participating in festivals. Students provided overwhelmingly positive responses, especially in regard to motivation. They felt that rehearsal was more focused leading up to the contest and they were driven to outperform other bands and get high adjudicator ratings. Students also felt that the experience of preparing for and participating in festivals contributes to the social component of being in band and helped "create a sense of family" (p. 491). All students who participated in this survey were in bands who received one of the highest two ratings, so it is unclear whether students who were in low-performing bands would be similarly motivated by the festival outcomes.

In contrast to these findings, Lowe (2018) found that students may prefer cooperative

events over strictly competitive festivals. Australian band students participated in both a traditional competition festival and a cooperative music festival and 345 students completed a survey about their experience. In the cooperative festival, ensembles received a 30-minute clinic, students watched other ensemble performances, and had the opportunity to interreact and perform with students from other schools. Students found both the cooperative and competitive festivals enjoyable, but some students indicated the stress and lack of audience as a deterrent for the competitive festival. When asked about the feelings towards participation in competitive festivals, responses mostly ranged from neutral to low, suggesting students may not find the competitive element very important.

Stamer (2004) found that Sophomore choir students had a significant more positive view of the role of competition in their program than did older students. Additionally, when conducting a follow-up survey of the original group of sophomores when they seniors, findings were consistent with previous research, suggesting that as students progress in their high school music education they place less emphasis on contests (Stamer, 2006). Juniors and seniors rated interpersonal and musical aspects of their choir experience higher than competitive elements.

Neil (2005) surveyed orchestra students in two schools within the North Texas area on the aspects of orchestra they least and most enjoy. The top motivators included opportunities to play their instrument and their favorite activities were trips and being with friends. Among the lowest rated activities were both extra rehearsals and participation in the UIL Concert & Sight-Reading Event. It is likely that these two are linked, as extra rehearsals often increase leading up to UIL.

Lind (1999) surveyed choral music students in ten different schools to examine perceptions of classroom environment in relationship to Hispanic student enrollment. Choir programs were categorized as either having proportionate or non-proportionate Hispanic student enrollment in relation to the overall school demographic. Perception of competition and teacher control were the only categories in which students indicated a significant difference in classroom environment, with students in proportionate programs reporting lower levels of both. Additionally, the only significance along student demographic lines was that Hispanic students across both contexts reported lower group affiliation. Lind & Butler (2003) found similar low reporting of competitive environment when this study was replicated with choir programs and African American enrollment. Collectively, the findings from these two studies suggest that African American and Latinx students may be more drawn to choral programs that are perceived to have less competition and teacher control.

Similarly, Rawlings and Stoddard (2017) examined peer connectedness in two suburban middle school band programs with contrasting demographics. Researchers identified lower levels of peer connectedness in a band program located within the more racially diverse school. In contrast to previous research on peer connectedness in bands, they also found that students at both schools reported higher levels of connectedness to peers outside of their band class. The authors wondered whether the popular practice of chair tests and developing internal hierarchies within bands may lead to "a disrupting effect on the potential for student musicians to develop strong connections with each other" (Rawlings & Stoddard, 2017, p. 130).

Parker (2015) addressed the role of intra-program competition by examining student perception of selective practices in high school choral programs. Students became

"enculturated in the reputation and tradition of their high school choir program" which helped to produce student buy-in (p. 133). However, the accompanying exclusivity and privilege of the selective ensembles functioned as a deterrent for some students. Parker found an unintentional product of the selective environment was student-to-student competition. The competitive nature of these programs often prevented teachers and students from fully embodying a care orientation. Many students rationalized the selectivity as necessary for motivation and growth. Additionally, "there was a firm reality that some will never gain entry into the most selective ensembles, regardless of how hard they try." (p. 144)

In an examination of a predominantly Latinx middle school band program, Gerrard (2018) sought to examine the compatibility of the concert band model with Barrio Based Epistemologies and Ontologies (Irizarry & Raible, 2011). At this school, teachers incorporated a “pass-off” system where students’ progress through a series of musical performance assessments was tracked with a visible sticker chart in the band classroom. While this was seen as a motivational tool by the teacher and many students, other students were discouraged by the competitive environment created from the pass-off system, citing instances of peer victimization and condemnation.

Brewer (2010) shared the stories of three high school band students in a rural border community in which he taught for 6 years where the majority of the student population was Latinx and low-income. While some students felt the financial obligations of band were deterrents, many spoke of the cultural differences within the band classroom. Many of the students in band had to traverse a liminal space to reconcile and navigate the two worlds, as did Brewer himself as an outsider to the Las Vistas community. Brewer reflects on his complicity

in creating and maintaining this "safe space" for certain students at the expense of excluding students who did not already fit the mold. In part, he points to the dominance of public competitions as heavily influencing the pressure to cultivate a program that could be "successful" within these structures. For both students and teachers, it is a visible form of reinforcement and in the context of his rural community it was also a badge of "we are just as good as you" (p.60). By emphasizing the product of band, teachers may intentionally or unknowingly discourage students who are "liabilities." Brewer suggests we need to give more attention to the "struggle between the success of the performance ensemble and the altruistic ideals of educational inclusion" (p. 62).

In a qualitative study, Escalante (2019) sought to explore the experience of music teachers and students in predominantly Latinx schools in regard to racism, racial identity, colorblindness, and resistance. The participants included three Latinx students engaged in music ensembles within their high school and four music teachers working at predominantly Latinx schools. A theme throughout the paper was the role of aspirational colorblindness and the whiteness of music education norms. Many students reinforced colorblind perspectives when discussing their desires to be a part of the band or "just happen to be" a Latina violinist. Within his conclusion, Escalante challenges the ideological assumption that "successful" music programs participate in judged, musical competitions in which they perform Western Classical music, and questions what a music classroom may look like that centers itself around serving students' musical lives outside of school.

A considerable limitation of this body of research is the dominance of survey research to examine students' perceptions towards competition. The studies on the topic of large ensemble

contests present, and likely suffer from a heavy selection bias, as the student participants were all largely involved in "successful" programs. In contrast, the findings from the qualitative studies present a much more nuanced depiction of students' perceptions of competition within the music ensemble. While Parker (2015) sought to examine the impacts of a selective structure in her study, many of the other researchers mentioned did not (Brewer, 2010; Escalante, 2019; Gerrard, 2018). However, elements of competition were so salient to their participants' music experience that it warranted discussion within their research. Though not exhaustive, these examples provide in-depth and rich accounts of some of the tensions experienced by minoritized students in music education, including the problematic role of competition.

Summary

The history of education in the Unites States is fraught with inequity along racial lines that continues impact opportunities for students of color. Despite the landmark ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education,* residential segregation persists within this country (Charles, 2003; Massey, Roswell, & Domina, 2009) resulting in students of color more heavily concentrated in underfunded schools (Kozol, 1991/2012; Valencia, 2000). While these schools were once associated with urban centers, the increase of *suburban minoritization* (Frey, 2000, 2018) has meant that urban-adjacent school districts are experiencing rises in attendance of Black, Latinx, and Asian student attendance. Milner's (2012) framework of urban school categorization—*urban intensive*, *urban emergent,* and *urban characteristic*—provides a tool through which educational researchers can more accurately examine variation in school context due to population shifts within the United States.

The field of music education tacitly centers the suburban experience of music education,

often depicting rural and urban music education as challenging and in need of solutions. School orchestra programs in particular are concentrated in urban or suburban school districts (Chappell & Nussbaum, 2019; Smith et al., 2018; Strietelmeier, 2019). Based on this, I posit that many schools with orchestra fall into one of Milner's (2012) variants of urban schools, warranting a more nuanced examination of music education within these locales. As such, I explicitly sought an *urban characteristic* research site due to the overlapping features with both suburban and urban counterparts.

While education researchers have exhaustively examined the role of race in shaping education opportunity and classroom experience, the role of race in music education is underexamined. Within music education, scholars have identified differences in student participation along the lines of race (Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019; Kinney, 2010, 2018) but fewer researchers have sought the perspectives of K-12 students of color. Guided by the tenets of critical race theory, I am seeking to speak to racially underrepresented students regarding their music education experience to serve as a much-needed counternarrative to the one-dimensional representation of the school orchestra experience.

In order to guide my conceptualization of race within this research, I draw upon the framework of critical race theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995/2006; Milner, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997). Based on CRT and educational scholarship, I approach this research with the assumption that race is a social construction that has material impact to a person's access to opportunity (Delgado & Stancic, 2001). That modern racism is cloaked in race-neutral language, further challenging its identification and eradication (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). And, that schooling is a social institution designed to maintain the racial

status quo through Ameritocracy (Akom, 2004) and the “educational survival complex” (Love, 2019, p. 27).

I choose to focus explicitly on the topic of competition based due to the ways in which competition functions to serve hegemonic norms in music education (Escalante, 2019; Tucker, 2020). Numerous analyses of scoring trends have demonstrated a positive relationship with student income level and competitive outcomes. Even though these studies do not explicitly discuss race, due to the higher concentration of poverty among students of color (Hussar et al., 2020), it is likely that the low-SES programs also had a higher representation of students of color. Numerous researchers who sought to learn about the experiences of racial minority students in music education uncovered an incidental role of competition in shaping this experience (Brewer, 2010; Escalante, 2019; Gerrard, 2018; Lind, 1999; Lind & Butler, 2003). Peer-to-peer competition in particular can inhibit the ability to foster a caring classroom environment (Parker, 2015). As a result, I aim to explore the ways in which students of color discuss their high school orchestra experience with a particular interest competitive structure.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to explore how competitive structures shape the orchestra experience for students from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups who are enrolled in an urban characteristic high school orchestra program. In the context of this study, urban characteristic refers to a school that is located in a suburban district but "may be starting to experience some of the challenges that are sometimes associated with urban school contexts" (Milner, 2012, p. 559). Such a school may deal with many of the same problems as schools located in urban districts, but also benefit from the additional resources associated with suburban settings. However, in the context of the "highly-competitive music education environment of Texas" (Tucker, 2020, p. 9), teachers and students may also face increased tensions surrounding competitive expectations.

The following research questions guided this study:

(1) How do racially minoritized students perceive the role of racial identity in their lives and in the context of orchestra?

(2) How do racially minoritized students experience racial tensions in an urban characteristic high school? How are these manifested within the orchestra program?

(3) How does individual competition and comparison-based assessment shape racially minoritized students' orchestra experience?

(4) How do racially minoritized students ascribe meaning to their high school orchestra experiences?

In this chapter I discuss the following elements related to methodology and design of the proposed study: (a) case study and rationale for this approach, (b) reflexivity, (c) theoretical framework and the role in both design and analysis, (d) context, (e) research site and

participant selection within this site, (f) data collection procedures, (g) data analysis, and (h) trustworthiness.

Case Study

Qualitative inquiry was appropriate for this study because the phenomenon of student-level competition is both complex and bound to a specific context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Patton (2015), qualitative research can be used to "illuminate system and systemic issues," providing insight into group dynamics, sociocultural perspectives, and environmental factors (p. 8). Within the scope of this study, I examined multiple perspectives from within the system of a high school orchestra program in order to understand the role of competition in shaping student experience, specifically for those historically underrepresented within this setting.

I selected an instrumental case study method to examine this phenomenon and my approach consisted of a synthesis of elements from Stake (1995), Yin (2009), and Merriam's (1998) conceptualizations of case study research. The site of the selected high school orchestra program represents a single unit of study. Within this context, I solicited participation from teachers, students, and an administrator to present a "rich and holistic account" of how race and competition interact within this context (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). This study qualifies an *instrumental* case study, as I use this specific case to illuminate the intricate racial landscape from the perspective of underrepresented students in school orchestra programs (Stake, 1995). By speaking to a variety of actors within this site, I bring "attention to complexity and contextuality" to the issue of observation (Stake, 1995, p. 16).

I opted to use a single site to investigate the both the racial landscape of school

orchestra and competition due to the embedded nature of a classroom within a school and the role of individual teachers in shaping the classroom. In this way, this study "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Teachers interpret and carry out policy within their classrooms in a way that aligns with their personal belief of what is best for their students (Marz & Kelcthermans, 2013). As such, it would have been imprudent to compare student experience across multiple sites in absence of teacher perspectives and campus context. By including teacher and student voices, I was able to it to situate students' experiences within the context of the classrooms in which they operate. The individual student participants provided insight into how they perceive the racial landscape and competitive structures, while teachers interpreted the broader climate of the school.

I selected this specific site due to its representativeness of a cross-section of characteristics common yet underrepresented in research on string education. The location of the school is within a district that is both suburban, yet also urban characteristic, in that it bears demographic resemblance to urban counterparts (Milner, 2012). Within the context of string programs, the majority are concentrated within urban and suburban districts, both within Texas (Chappell & Nussbaum, 2019) and at a national level (Gillespie & Hamann, 1998; Strietelmeier, 2019). While schools that are considered urban fringe may make up a small portion of all schools nationwide, it is likely that they make up a considerable portion of schools with orchestra, due to the frequent proximity to an urban center. Additionally, such *urban characteristic* orchestra programs likely face community pressure due to suburban proximity,

yet also may experience similar challenges as encountered within urban schools, providing resonance to many school orchestras.

Reflexivity

> Given the intense interaction of the researcher with persons in the field and elsewhere, given a constructivist orientation to knowledge, given the attention to participant intentionality and sense of self, however descriptive the report, the researcher ultimately comes to offer a personal view. (Stake, 1995, p. 42).

As indicated by Stake, I acknowledge that the nature of my personal identity and experiences will form the lens through which I interpreted my research. Within the context of this study, I was keenly aware of the possible tensions and challenges posed by my identity as a white female engaging in research examining the role of race. As such, rather than attempt to suspend my perspective, I chose to interrogate and make explicit the ways in which my "personal view" shapes this project.

Many educational scholars have attempted to address how best to approach inquiry with participants of color. Tillman (2002) and Milner (2007) both propose frameworks that emphasize the importance of thoughtful theoretical and methodological approaches regardless of researcher identity. Grounded in central tenets of Critical Race Theory, Milner (2007) suggests researchers remain "actively engaged, thoughtful, and forthright regarding tensions that can surface when conducting research where issues of race and culture are concerned" (p. 388). I drew upon Milner's guidance for researcher positionally in my design, execution, and interpretation of this study.

- *Researching the self:* Engage in continual self-reflection throughout research.
- *Researching the self in relation to others*: Reflect on relationship between self and participants; examine inherent tensions and power relations at play.

- *Engaged reflection and representation:* Researcher and participants reflect together such that voices of the researcher and participants are represented in the findings *and* interpretation.

- *Shifting from self to system*: Situate individual experiences into the broader sociohistorical context.

While researchers have found that racially marginalized participants were more open about issues of racism when a non-white researcher was present (Chui & Knight, 1999), Kitzinger & Barbour (1999) suggest that the ownership of an 'othered' identity (in my case, a queer woman) may make a researcher more aware of the social dynamics at play as a result of minoritized identities. Researchers need to have an awareness of the "tensions potentially created by racial and cultural differences" in both collection and analysis of data (Chui & Knight, 1999, p. 112). Throughout this process, I engaged in continual reflection and consult both the literature and engage *critical friends* to locate the "seen, unseen, and unforeseen dangers" I encountered (Milner, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) was developed within the field of critical legal studies by legal scholars including Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado to examine how racial subordination persisted despite the passing of civil rights legislation (Khalifa et al., 2013). CRT was revolutionary in that it interpreted and accounted for the "symbolic world of culture" and the differences in lived experiences based on the social construction of race (Calmore, 1992, p. 2163). With this in mind, CRT scholars in education begin their interpretation with the understanding that race is under constant reconstruction and has material outcomes on students' schooling experience.

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate first championed the use of critical race theory as a lens to understand racial inequalities and intersectional forms of marginalization in education. CRT offers a "radical critique" of the status quo and challenges norms of objectivity and race neutrality in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006/1995, p. 25). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) discuss the use of narrative and storytelling as central to CRT and a valuable tool for educational research. Through counter-story, "critical race methodology in education focuses research on how students of color experience and respond to the U.S. educational system" (pp. 36-37).

Adapted from Solorzano and Yosso (2002), I approach my research with the following assumptions grounded in critical race theory:

- Racism is endemic and intersects with other forms of subordination
- Dominant ideologies of objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity are structures of subordination
- CRT research is grounded in a commitment to liberation and social justice
- Experiential knowledge is valid and necessary to understand systemic oppression, and
- Transdisciplinary approaches and perspectives are necessary to fully uncover the mechanisms of racism and subordination.

Throughout this project, I used critical race theory (CRT) to shape design and analysis. I position Pinewood as reflective of many suburban districts facing demographic shifts and suburban minoritization, and selected student participants from underrepresented racial groups in orchestra (Elpus & Abril, 2019). Research on race in music education is limited, and many existing studies examine race from a color-blind perspective (Escalante, 2020). Students in this study, due to their minoritized racial identity, are able to make visible the racial tensions that

exist within Pinewood and the orchestra program that go overlooked by white students and teachers. Aligning with the instrumental case study design, I developed a composite counter-story to examine the racialized experiences of school orchestra told from the perspective of racially underrepresented students (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002)

Experiences from students of color teach us about aspects of the orchestral experience excluded from master narratives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Thus, my process of coding and data analysis centered student voices by utilizing in vivo coding as my primary method. I then generated pattern codes and thematic sub-categories from existing in vivo codes. Emergent themes represent students' depiction of the racial landscape of Pinewood and their high school orchestral experiences.

In order to contextualize and situate thematic findings, I examined sub-categories against tenets of critical race theory. In this process, I uncovered points of intersection and synthesis where tenets of CRT help explain phenomenon and experiences discussed by participants. Within the discussion, I invoke tenets of meritocracy, interest convergence, and "new racism" (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Kohli et al., 2017) to reveal mechanisms shaping the racial landscape of Pinewood.

Context

Tucker (2020) identified Texas as "highly-competitive music education environment," and I found that instrumental teachers in Texas Title I schools may experience competition more intensely due to the compounding of circumstantial challenges (Nussbaum 2020). Thus, I selected a context in which the nature of competition may be felt more acutely. The Title I status in combination with the location in a school with a history of competitive success and the

social/professional pressures based on schools in proximity. In this section, I will provide an overview of competition policy and the typical engagement in competition within an orchestra program.

The Texas Music Educators Association

Within the state of Texas, the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) and University Interscholastic League (UIL) organize and maintain both individual student and ensemble competitions. Even though these are distinct entities with separate governance, the two organizations are intertwined in the governance of many music competitions in the state and often conflated by music educators. In order to provide the policy landscape of music competition in the state, I will discuss the primary competitive events and roles of these two organizations as it pertains to this research.

The Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) is a robust professional organization that holds an annual convention, ensemble competitions, and student competitions. TMEA boasts a membership of over 17,000 active music teachers, music administrators, and college students and facilitates the flagship student-level competition structure within the state, which is the All-State process (TMEA, 2020). The state is divided in 33 geographic regions, each with a set of elected officers (music teachers in the region) to organize and facilitate TMEA events. These same officers are also often tasked with assisting in organizing UIL events.

The All-Region event is designed for individual music students to "audition for the opportunity to rehearse together and perform in a Region band, orchestra, or choir;" for high school students the All-Region audition serves as the entry point for the prestigious All-State process (TMEA, 2020). At the middle school level, regions are able to fully dictate the material

used in the audition, but at the high school level regions must adhere to a using All-State repertoire as a component of their audition process in order for students to be eligible for All-State. The process for the band, orchestra, and choir divisions is very similar, but from this point forward I will only be discussing the process followed by the Orchestra Division of TMEA unless otherwise noted.

TMEA seats a total of three full orchestras, totaling approximately 250 spots available for violin, viola, cello, double bass, harp, and piano students across the state.[7] The audition process spans a total time of six months, beginning when music is released in May until student placements are announced in November. Two etudes from standard technical repertoire are released in mid-May and a selection of 4-6 orchestral excerpts are added to the audition repertoire in July. Individual regions usually release their All-Region Orchestra material to coincide with the start of the school year; this must include at least 30 seconds of each All-State etude and will also have material unique to their region. Most regions hold All-Region auditions in mid-October. Each region is allowed a set number of maximum students who may record for All-State; these students are determined by the ranking of the All-Region auditions. Only a handful of regions in the state max out these upper limits. Students will then record their "All-State tape" on the last Saturday in October. Each region is responsible for facilitating a central recording site and monitoring all students' auditions. Despite attempts at standardization, quality in recording varies drastically from region to region. The following weekend, teachers from around the state form local panels to judge the auditions and results are posted that

[7] The number of available harp and piano spots varies slightly from year to year depending on repertoire. Proportionally, there are also more double bass spots available due to the need for bassists in the wind ensembles.

Sunday evening, available to any TMEA member on the website.

The University Interscholastic League

University Interscholastic League (UIL) "exists to provide educational extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests" and manages the administration of uniformly organized music events across the state (University Interscholastic League, n.d.). During the late 1940s, governance of large-ensemble music contests in Texas shifted from TMEA to UIL (Bedicheck, 1956). However, UIL was a white-only organization until 1966 and it was not until the disbanding of the Prairie View Interscholastic League–UIL counterpart for predominantly Black schools–in 1970 that UIL events became integrated (Jones & Chappell, 2021). Today, the UIL organization defines policy and judging criterion for the operation of large-ensemble and Solo & Small Ensemble music events. Within each region (as determined by TMEA), UIL Region Secretaries and local music teachers determine when and where each of the events will be offered: Marching Contest, Solo & Small Ensemble (S&E), and Concert & Sight-Reading Evaluation (C&SR). For each of these events, there are separate contest sites and dates for the divisions of music—band, choir, and orchestra. All events have designated evaluation systems, rubrics, and explicit performance requirements.

UIL hosts local S&E events for each division for most of the 33 regions in the state and students who receive a Division 1 rating on a at their local contest are eligible to participate at the State Solo & Ensemble Contest held in Austin over Memorial Day Weekend. Due to the state commitment and the size of some of the regions in the state, some school districts select to host their own S&E events. However, these largely mirror the UIL guidelines.

When considering all of the cumulative TMEA and UIL events within a school year, an

individual high school string student has the potential to participate in an abundance of competitive events. It would not be uncommon for a high school orchestra student to participate in TMEA All-Region Auditions (mid-October), All-State taping (late-October), Solo & Ensemble (January), UIL String Orchestra Evaluation (March), and an additional festival associated with a Spring trip. For the higher performing ensembles, the group may also prepare a concert to record for TMEA Honor Orchestra in the fall and participate in UIL Full Orchestra Evaluation. Lastly, individual students are expected to prepare an audition for placement within the hierarchy of their school's ensembles the following school year. Needless to say, there is hardly a time in the school year when the top string students are not preparing for some form of competition or evaluation. Based on the pervasiveness in competition within and among orchestra programs, I sought a research site that would exemplify this phenomenon while also facing challenges as a result of its urban characteristic status.

Research Site and Participant Selection

Pinewood High School Orchestra

The study took place in one high school in the *major suburban* (TEA, 2020b) Treeland District[8] located in North Texas. This site was selected due to its status as an "urban characteristic" district (Milner, 2012) with a diverse student population and the orchestra teachers' willingness to participate. Pinewood High School[9] was established in 1969 and is one of four comprehensive high schools in the Treeland school district. Based on 2018-2019 TEA

[8] Pseudonym

[9] Pseudonym

data, the school has 2,620 students in grades 9-12 and an ethnically diverse student population (see Table 4.1 for details). The percentage of students identified as "Economically Disadvantaged"[10] is 55.2%, qualifying the school for Title I funding, and 14.5% of the student population are English Language Learners (TEA, 2020b).

The orchestra program serves 140 students divided into in four performing ensembles and has three full-time music teachers who are all string specialists. Music ensembles at this school have a long history of success, with the band and orchestra achieving competitive notoriety at both state and national levels. Twice in the school's history the orchestra has been named TMEA Honor String Orchestra, one of these was under the direction of the current head director, Mr. G[11]. Additionally, the marching band has advanced to state marching contest every year since 1998. Both the top band and orchestra have been invited to perform at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic [12] within the past 5 years. A more detailed description of Pinewood and the orchestra program is located in the following chapter.

Participant Selection

All individual participants are affiliated with this high school orchestra program as either students or teachers. Of the three orchestra teachers, Ms. B and Mrs. S, agreed to participate in interviews for this study. Due to scheduling conflicts, Mr. G did not participate, but did assist in student recruitment. While teacher perspectives were not central to the analysis of this study,

[10] Based on percent of students with FRL status (TEA, 2020).

[11] Pseudonym

[12] The Midwest Clinic lauds itself as the largest instrumental music education conference in the world. Instrumental ensembles across the country submit video applications to be considered for a performance at the Midwest Clinic; invited performances are considered very a very prestigious honor among instrumental music teachers.

the additional perspectives of Ms. B and Mrs. S developed a more comprehensive understanding of the climate of Pinewood, orchestra program structure, and role of competition. These teachers served as "key informants," providing intricate knowledge of Pinewood and the dynamics of the orchestra program which in turn illuminated the structural context in which the students operate (Patton, 2015, p. 268).

Student participants were selected through a combination of criterion-based and maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2015). The primary criterion for student participants was their self-identification as member of an underrepresented racial/ethnic group—Black, Latinx, American Indian, or mixed-race. Because the participants were recruited through their orchestra teacher, they met the additional criterion of high school orchestra students. In order to explore different perspectives on competition, sought students with varying levels of success and engagement with individual competitions. As such, I sought to include students who were members of the different levels of orchestra at Pinewood. This was based on the assumption that members of the most selective ensemble engaged more heavily in competitive structures, while students in the less selective ensembles have respectively lower levels of engagement with competition, whether due to lack of success or disinterest.

Recruitment

In order to recruit participants, I first received permission from both the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) and school district IRB to conduct interviews and correspond with participants during the Fall of 2020. Following approval from both university and district IRB in late fall, I formally reached out to the head orchestra director at Pinewood to extend an invitation for participation in this study. Mr. G conferred with the fellow orchestra teachers at

Pinewood, and they agreed to assist in the research study; we decided to launch into student recruitment at the initiation of the Spring 2021 semester.

As mentioned, all three orchestra teachers aided in the recruitment of student participants which took place at the beginning of the Spring semester 2021. During the first week back from winter break, I corresponded via phone and email with all orchestra directors to explain the scope of my study and ideal student participants. We decided that teachers would identify potential participants and speak to them individually to vet their willingness to participate. I then provided all teachers with digital recruitment information including my participant guidelines and material to provide interested students and parents. Following approximately two weeks of student recruitment, the teachers compiled and shared with me a contact list of twelve orchestra students who met the criteria.

From this list of twelve students, I sent each student an email invitation to participate—with a parent copied—and requested an opportunity to schedule a brief chat via Zoom. From this original list, I received a total of 6 student responses over the course of about ten days. I scheduled 15-minute Zoom meetings with each participant as a means to ensure they would have access to the platform and begin the process of rapport-building. Following a successful pre-interview Zoom, I sent all students and parents a copy of the Consent/Assent form to obtain formal permission for participation in the study. All recruitment activities were completed by the end of January 2021.

Data Collection Procedures

In adherence to traditions of case study research, I aspired to collect data through a variety of methods that would provide insight into the context of the Pinewood HS Orchestra

and participants' lived experiences (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995); however, real-world challenges associated the ongoing global pandemic and unprecedented weather shaped the scope of data collection. Interviews served as the primary source of data collection, as interviews are well-suited to understanding how "people interpret the world around them" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 108) and I incorporated both individual interviews and one student participant group interview. Throughout data collection and analysis, I remained in contact with participants via email, sharing initial interpretations and seeking clarification as necessary. Participant email interactions and school-affiliated websites supplemented and enhanced data collection. Due to restrictions in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to incorporate a field element or conduct in-person interviews. All individual interviews and focus group took place using videoconferencing software, Zoom.

Individual Interviews

Because I was interested in participants' experiences and perceptions of school orchestra, interviews were the primary form of data (Seidman, 2013). I held three interviews with each student participant based on the Seidman (2013) three-interview structure and two interviews with teacher participants. The Seidman interview process "focuses on the experiences of participants and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 16). This approach is grounded in a phenomenological tradition in that it (1) emphasizes the temporal and transitory nature of human experience, (2) acknowledges the subjective nature of understanding, (3) emphasizes the role of lived experience in explaining phenomena, and (4) situates meaning in context (Seidman, 2013).

By using *semi-structured life world interviews* (Kvale & Berkman, 2009), I was able to

"obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world" (p. 26). The life world interviews provided a subjective understanding of participants' perspective and aligned with the broader Seidman (2013) structure. In the Seidman format, the first interview focuses on life history, the second on current experiences related to the topic of study, and the third on how participants reflect on and interpret the meaning of these experiences.

In the first interview with students, I gathered information about their life history in order to develop background and context for their present experience (Seidman, 2013). In addition to developing background, I engaged in rapport-building with students by holding interactive conversations and providing space for them to give rich and detailed stories about their childhood and family. Topics covered student home life, family culture, personal interests, early educational experiences, and process of joining orchestra.

The second interview focused on current experiences related to the phenomenon of investigation: orchestra experience, competitive engagement, and observations about race in school and orchestra. As a result of the timing of this study, students were in the process of preparing for the UIL C&SR Ensemble Evaluation, which was a virtual event. Students were able to talk about real-time experiences and shifts in orchestra routine as a result of the UIL preparation that coincided with this research. Within the second round of interviews, I began to realize that individual competition did not play a large role in shaping many students' orchestra experiences and did not lead to very rich conversations data. Due to the semi-structured approach to my interviews, I was able to pursue topics that were more germane such as shifts in their schooling due to COVID-19, aspects of enjoyment in orchestra, and visions of music-making past high school.

Within the third student interview, I asked participants to reflect on experiences they perceived as central to shaping their perceptions about race and their orchestral experience. For all but one student participant, the third interview was scheduled in the week following the group interview. As a result, I was also able to ask participants to reflect and speak to topics generated during the group interview. Participants drew on previously discussed experiences to situate their perspectives and understandings on orchestra, competition, race, and the intersections of these forces.

Interviews with teacher participants were focused on their perspectives as teachers and providing contextual information about Pinewood High School and the orchestra program. In the first interview, we discussed their educational background, entry point into teaching, and position within the Pinewood orchestra. During the second interview we discussed the campus culture at Pinewood, observations about racial dynamics, structure of the orchestra program, and students within the program.

Focus Group Interview

In the absence of field observations, the inclusion of a student focus group interview helped to develop a better understanding of the "social world" of the orchestra program and the Pinewood campus at large (Michel, 1999, p. 38). A defining characteristic of a focus group is the "explicit use of group interaction to generate data" (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 4). Within this study, the group interaction allowed students who were enrolled in different ensembles of the same orchestra program make connections and identify points of difference between their individual experiences. In addition to providing greater social context of Pinewood, the focus groups aided in uncovering normative assumptions, especially those pertaining to race and

racism, held by students (Bloor et al., 2001).

I decided to schedule the focus group interview during Treeland's spring break to alleviate school-related scheduling conflicts; all participants communicated availability for the scheduled time, but Eli was absent for the first half of the interview and did not contribute to the conversation once joining[13]. Most of the students did not regularly socialize with each other but had a general familiarity with the other participants. As a result, I began with some ice breaker topics and lead the interview with more concrete questions about orchestra to warm up the conversation. Either Cindy and Liam tended to jump in when it felt there was a longer pause in conversation and I occasionally prompted Jacob and Claudia to weigh in when it came to orchestra perspectives. In the second half of the interview, I changed the direction of conversation to asking students questions about race and racial dynamics they observe at Pinewood. Due to the more sensitive and personal nature of the topic of race, I did not prompt students or request input if it was not offered; Jacob remained largely silent during this second portion. Because I held the third interview with most participants in the week following the focus group interview, this provided an opportunity to debrief and expound on topics discussed in the group interview (Bloor et al., 2001; Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999).

As mentioned previously, all interviews were conducted using the videoconferencing software Zoom and lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. I entered all interviews with an outline of protocols (see Appendices C and D) but asked emergent questions based on the organic nature of conversations. Additionally, reflections from previous interviews informed subsequent

[13] Unprompted, both Liam and Jacob texted Eli multiple times to remind him of the interview. When Eli and I had our third individual interview the following day, he divulged that the day of the focus group interview was one of his few days off work during spring break and he had over-slept.

interviews with each participant. Each interview occurred between February and April 2021 (see Table 3.1 for specific dates), with each interview cycle scheduled so that participants had approximately one week between each interview[14]. I used the built-in recording function in the Zoom platform and transcribed each interview verbatim for analysis.

Table 3.1

Data Collection Dates

Participant	Interview	Interview 2	Interview 3
Cindy	2/12/21	2/24/21	3/26/21
Claudia	2/9/21	2/23/21	3/5/21
Eli	2/11/21	3/5/21	3/19/21
Jacob	2/25/21	3/9/21	3/29/21
Liam	2/12/21	3/2/21	3/23/21
Serena	2/11/21	3/5/21	3/23/21
Mrs. S	3/23/21	3/30/21	N/A
Ms. B	3/26/21	4/7/21	N/A

Note. Focus group interview was held on 3/18/21.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis began concurrently with data collection (Merriam, 1998). Throughout data collection, I first engaged with the data through interview transcription and maintained notes of early observations. As I neared the conclusion of the interview process, I entered first-cycle coding and began to shape the report of my findings based on ongoing analysis. As my analysis

[14] I conducted first round interviews with most student participants during the week of February 8-12. On February 13th, an unprecedented winter storm hit the state of Texas bringing multiple days of snowfall and sub-freezing temperatures for the duration of the following week. Millions of residents in the state were left without consistent electricity or working plumbing, including myself and many of the student participants. Schools were closed state-wide for the week of February 15-19 and interviews did not resume until the following week, on February 23rd—two weeks after the first round of student interviews.

formed, I consulted relevant literature in an iterative process to situate my findings and engaged in regular peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Throughout the entire analysis process, I utilized analytic memos to "reflect and expound" upon the data analysis process as it unfolded (Saldaña, 2021, p. 59).

Coding

I analyzed all interview transcripts and additional participant communication using both inductive and deductive coding. Aligning with critical race theory and the tenet of counterstory (Alemán & Alemán, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Milner, 2007), I sought to center student voice and experience in my coding process. "Child and adolescent voices are often marginalized, and coding with their actual words enhances and deepens adult's understanding of their discourses, cultures, and worldviews." (Saldaña, 2021, p. 138.) As such, I began with line-by-line coding, applying a combination of *in vivo* and structural codes (Saldaña, 2021). For structural codes, I used *a priori* topical codes to label segments of the interview, creating an indexing system to quickly identify relevant participant biographical information and segments for further analysis. As I continued to code subsequent rounds of interviews, I added additional structural codes as I began to notice trends across cases of relevant topics.

Following first-cycle coding, I embarked in sense-making through further inductive coding, deductive coding, categorizing, and consulting relevant literature. At the conclusion of first-cycle coding, I reviewed my codebook of *in vivo* codes to begin identifying trends. As I noticed emergent categories through this process, I consulted relevant research and engaged in peer debriefings. During second-cycle coding, I employed both inductive and deductive pattern coding. Pattern coding is a process of pulling together first-cycle codes into "more meaningful

and parsimonious units of analysis" to create a "meta code" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 322). In reviewing interview transcripts, I identified densely coded passages and assigned an *in vivo meta code* that encapsulated the concept at discussion. Using elements of critical race theory, I developed and applied deductive pattern codes to these data-rich passages, where applicable, to place my findings in conversation with the theoretical framework. I constructed categories based on the meta code list and organized categories into emergent themes to shape my final analysis and findings.

Memos and Journaling

Throughout the collection and analysis, I maintained a record of my developing analysis through analytic memos (Saldaña, 2021) and general notetaking. Memos were a means of tracing my analytic and interpretive journey with the data, whereas I used unstructured notetaking to keep track of logistical elements of the research process as it unfolded. Within my QDAS, I generated micro-level memos regarding the meaning behind individual codes as well as macro-level memos reflecting on important shifts in thinking, unexpected findings, and potential implications. As I began to construct categories and themes, I consulted memos generated through the coding process to inform my development.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that researchers adopt new methodological language to reflect the naturalistic character of qualitative research. They posit that *trustworthiness* more accurately describes what would be considered *reliability, validity,* and *objectivity* in a positivistic paradigm*,* and incorporates an evaluation of a study's *credibility,*

authenticity, transferability, and dependability. Contrastingly, Creswell & Poth (2018) view validation as a process to assess the accuracy of findings and suggest a qualitative study use multiple in the context of a single study. In this study, I established trustworthiness through a combination of validation strategies, including triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

The three-interview structure provided dependability to the study by examining how participants "make sense to themselves" and their experiences across each interview (Seidman, 2013, p. 27). Triangulation is an additional form of trustworthiness that involves "checking findings against other sources and perspectives" in order to ensure that the study's findings are not a result of a single method or source (Patton, 2015, p. 674). While I was unable to utilize reflective prompts as planned, holding both student and teacher interviews and consulting school websites enhanced trustworthiness. Furthermore, by holding the student focus group towards the end of the data collection, data generated within that setting can serve as a means of triangulation by qualifying and deepening initial findings (Bloor et al., 2001). For member-checking, I provided participants with interview transcriptions and participant profiles for review, and requested clarification as they saw fit (Stake, 1995). Additionally, I engaged in peer debriefings with an experienced qualitative researcher throughout the duration of the research process in order to review procedures, coding processes, and emergent thematic analyses.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

In this study, I examined the Pinewood orchestra program as an instrumental case within the broader context of orchestra programs in the highly competitive environment of music education in Texas (Tucker, 2020). While the primary interest of this research lies in the student experience, perceptions of belonging can only be understood through the rich context in which the experiences are embedded. While I provided general information in the previous chapter regarding the static nature of Pinewood High School and the orchestra program, within this chapter I will provide greater detail about the historical trends in the school district and the landscape of the Pinewood orchestra program in light of COVID-19.

Within the scope of this study, I conducted interviews with a total of eight participants: two orchestra teachers and six students. The two teacher participants were Mrs. S, a veteran orchestra teacher who has taught in Treeland for the past 15 years, and Ms. B, an early-career teacher who also attended Pinewood as a high school student. The six student participants were Cindy, Claudia, Serena, Liam, Eli, and Jacob. Students participated in different levels of the orchestra program, spanned sophomore to senior status, and represented all standard orchestral string instruments except bass.

In order to provide a comprehensive backdrop for this study, I first discuss the landscape of the broader Treeland school district, the climate of Pinewood High School, and the structure of the Pinewood orchestra program. I introduce teacher participants within the context of their roles in the orchestra programs and provide additional information about the dynamics of Pinewood. I close the chapter by introducing student participants through

individual participant portraits.

Treeland District and Demographic Shifts

During the 1980s and 1990s, urban fringe suburban school districts in Texas saw dramatic increases in student enrollment as families flocked into developing suburban areas fueled by the growth of the technology industry. Since 2000, these same inner-ring districts, including Treeland, have seen a sharp decline in white student enrollment and an increase in low-income students. The suburban minoritization process (Frey, 2020) occurs when families of color and immigrants are priced out of urban areas and move into surrounding cities, resulting in a migration of white, middle-class families into neighboring exurbs (Frey, 2018). Frey (2020) identifies a sizeable trend of metropolitan areas across the U.S. undergoing *suburban minoritization.* The Treeland district has been experiencing this "new white flight" with Pinewood staff and students navigating emergent tensions.

Both teacher participants discussed some of the major demographic shifts they noticed in the district over recent years and the impact those shifts had on school climate. According to Mrs. S, whose children attended and graduated from a different high school within the district, she saw the "white flight" manifesting itself through the congregation of white families into the academic magnet program housed at Treeland High School. Cindy said that Pinewood is often dubbed the "ghetto" school of the district and noticed sharp contrasts in student demographics when she attended district-wide academic competitions at another high school in Treeland:

> they are in the rich white neighborhood, so if you don't have enough money to go to [a prestigious private school] and all that, guess where you go? But you still have the superiority complex, and some of the funds. They're like upper middle class, you know? It's kind of like a joke like "Oh my god, like I would definitely get—we will get hate crimed there. Like let's not go there."

Ms. B admitted that she often compared how things are currently to the time she was at Pinewood as a student. As a student, she felt teachers really pushed that "everyone needs to go to college, and everyone needs to go to a top college," but now the school promotes a wider variety of post-high-school options. In recent years, Mrs. S discussed an effort to "increase school pride" and a very "strong Black culture" that administrators have intentionally cultivated at the school. The school currently has multiple Black administrators, and Ms. B was "relieved" to see they recently hired a Latinx administrator as well.

Pinewood

At this time, the Treeland district serves approximately 40,000 students with Pinewood High School sustaining a total student enrollment around 2,500 in grades 9–12. Pinewood is one of four comprehensive high schools in the district; houses a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) academy; and boasts "award winning Fine Arts programs" (school website). Participants overwhelmingly describe Pinewood as "very diverse" in terms of student racial makeup, academic commitment, and extracurricular participation. State enrollment data confirms that Pinewood population is more racially/ethnically diverse than the state as a whole (see table for comparison). The school website reflects broad academic and extracurricular offerings, with over 50 clubs and organizations advertised along with information about Advanced Placement (AP), dual-enrollment, and Career & Technology (CTE) courses. Additionally, school administrators deliver parent newsletters on a platform that supports translations to common household languages spoken in the district: Spanish, Vietnamese, Pashto, Urdu, Arabic, and Amharic.

Student participants reported appreciation with attending a school with such a

multifaceted academic profile and racially diverse student body; they also recognized the uniqueness of their circumstance. As a result of the diversity of the student body, participants did not feel there existed any dominant group identity or clique within the school, making it easy to not "stick out." At the same time, Cindy felt this detracted from an overall sense of school community: "the only thing that Pinewood students have in common is that we go to Pinewood." Regardless, students largely agreed with Jacob's sentiment that the heterogeneity made it easy to "find somewhere you fit in pretty quickly."

Table 4.1

Pinewood Demographics Comparison Chart 2019-2020 School Year (in %)

Demographic	Pinewood	Treeland	State of Texas
African American	26.6	22.1	12.6
Hispanic	37.6	38.8	52.8
White	17.7	28.9	27.0
American Indian	0.2	0.3	0.4
Asian	14.8	6.9	4.6
Pacific Islander	0.1	0.1	0.2
Two or more races	3.0	3.0	2.5
Economically Disadvantaged	59.5	56.9	60.3

Note. Based on student enrollment data from the Texas Education Agency.

I position the case of the Pinewood Orchestra as unique, yet reflective of orchestras within urban characteristic schools (Milner, 2012). As mentioned in the previous sections, the Treeland district and Pinewood itself has experienced rapid demographic shifts in parallel with urban fringe suburban districts across the country. String programs are overwhelmingly housed in suburban schools with a large student population (Chappell & Nussbaum, 2019; Gillespie & Hamann, 1998; National String Project Consortium, 2010; Tast, 2014). In this regard, Pinewood

is reflective of the "typical" campus with an orchestra program, many of which are likely experiencing similar demographic shifts.

Orchestra Program

The Pinewood orchestra program enrolls approximately 140 students divided into four performing groups. Three full-time string teachers—titled as "orchestra directors"—work at Pinewood; the teachers also coordinate to have additional private lessons instructors who provide pull-out individual lessons[15] to students during their orchestra period. Two junior high schools feed[16] into Pinewood with two string teachers at each. During the 2019-2020 school year, I developed a relationship with the teachers at Pinewood and one of the related junior high schools as a private bass instructor. I often chatted with the directors between lessons or during the lunch hour. It was clear to me that the teachers had a deep commitment to cultivating a welcoming community of adolescent string players.

Pinewood High School has a "very well respected" fine arts presence, with the band being the most prominent fine arts program on campus (Mrs. S, Interview 1). However, the orchestra and theatre programs also boast a strong reputation in the department. Due to the size of the fine arts programs and their physical location within the school, Mrs. S explains that the fine arts teachers are "not very aware of what's going on in other parts of the school." The

[15] In many suburban and high-performing music programs across the state, it is common practice for the music directors to arrange for local instrumental teachers to provide private lessons on-campus. Students pay private teachers directly for lessons at a standardized rate set by the district and receive instruction once a week during their class time in a practice room or other rehearsal space.

[16] Within school districts with multiple high schools, secondary schools that are zoned together form vertically-aligned "clusters." Each high school cluster usually holds two or three affiliated junior high/middle school campuses that "feed" students into the high school. A tacit hierarchy exists in which the head high school director holds influence over curricular and instructional decisions within the "feeder" music programs.

relative cohesion among the fine arts teachers also creates a space where students "feel safe exploring" their identities and develop strong social bonds (Mrs. S, Interview 1). The vibrancy of the fine arts programs was also evident in my time on campus; I arrived at Pinewood about one hour before the start of the school day and the halls of the fine arts wing were already filled with students sitting in corners socializing or preparing for a before-school rehearsals.

String Instruction in the School District

In the school district, students have the choice to begin playing an instrument in the sixth grade by choosing to join either band or orchestra. Because sixth grade is housed at the elementary level in the district, secondary teachers travel to provide group instruction to beginning students five days a week. The district has strong "vertical clusters" in which the high school teachers work very closely with the "feeder" junior high teachers to support instruction and align curriculum. String teachers within the Pinewood cluster divide elementary teaching duties among themselves each school year depending on preference and program enrollment. Both Mrs. S and Ms. B teach at least one elementary school string class a year. Mr. G usually does not teach an elementary string class, but instead visits each affiliated junior high on a regular weekly schedule to provide supplemental instruction.

Orchestra Teachers

All three teachers at Pinewood collaborate closely with each other and provide both pull-out and push-in instructional support[17] within each other's classes. Additionally, all three

[17] Each orchestra teacher at Pinewood is instructor of record for one ensemble—two in the case of Ms. B. The instructor of record is the primary teacher for that ensemble and makes programming decisions, yet all teachers are heavily involved in providing instructional support—often describes as either "push-in" or "pull-out." Push-in instruction refers to when a second teacher provides an extra set of eyes and ears within the classroom to offer

teachers have deep ties with both Pinewood and the Treeland district. Both Mr. G and Mrs. S had children who graduated from Treeland high schools and Ms. B is a graduate of Pinewood.

Mr. G is the white, middle-aged "head director" of the Pinewood orchestra program. Throughout his career, he has been involved in leadership in state professional organizations and has family who teach orchestra. In his role, he was the primary instructor for the top ensemble, regularly co-teachers at the feeder junior high schools, and handles many of the administrative tasks of the program. After working at Pinewood for 16 years, Mr. G announced that he would be leaving the school at the end of the 2020-2021 school year to take a job in a suburb about 30 miles from the major city.

Ms. S, a white veteran teacher, was the primary teacher of the second ensemble and coordinates beginning instruction within the vertical team, in addition to teaching at least one elementary group per year. She has worked in several districts within the metropolitan area, but spent the most time working in Treeland, both at the beginning of her career and then again for the past 15 years—7 years at a feeder junior high and the most-recent 8 at Pinewood. Knowing that many of her students would not go on to take private lessons, she has a strong commitment to developing fundamentals and described her approach to teaching beginners as "blue collar, heterogenous string teaching." Mrs. S also announced that she would be leaving at the end of the school year to begin her retirement, though she intends on remaining involved in the Pinewood cluster as a private lesson teacher.

The youngest of the three teachers is Ms. B, whom I first met when we attended the

---

feedback or student support while another teacher leads from the podium; pull-out instruction would be when a teacher removes struggling individual students or a whole section to provide specialized support in a separate instructional space.

same undergraduate institution. As a high schooler at Pinewood, Mr. G was her orchestra teacher and she also had Mrs. S as her junior high orchestra teacher. Ms. B is the primary teacher for the third and fourth orchestras at Pinewood, teaches an elementary beginner group, and also regularly provides instructional support at one of the junior high schools. Ms. B is first-generation Mexican-American; she talked about how her mom would practice English by volunteering to chaperone school field trips for her and her brother growing up.

Competitive Recognition

Over the years, the Pinewood orchestra has received numerous recognitions for competitive success. In the time Mr. G has taught at Pinewood, the orchestra has been selected as a TMEA Honor String Orchestra and invited to perform at the Midwest Clinic both as a string orchestra and full orchestra. Pinewood orchestras also regularly receive a *sweepstakes* rating at the UIL Concert & Sight-Reading Evaluation. While Mrs. S taught at the neighboring junior high in Treeland, she brought an invited group to perform at the TMEA convention.

In a typical school year, three Pinewood ensembles participate in the string orchestra UIL C&SR Evaluation and the top two also participate in full orchestra UIL. This year, Pinewood opted to participate in the virtual UIL process with two string ensembles: the top group as the Varsity entrant and a combined ensemble of the middle two orchestras as the Non-Varsity group. Each year, a handful of students audition for and get accepted into the TMEA All-Region orchestra. In years past, a few students would make it into the TMEA All-State orchestra each year, but more recently it has been less common for Pinewood orchestra to have an “All-Stater.”

Money and Equipment

The Treeland district provides strong financial support to fine arts programs through generous staffing allocations and district funds for equipment purchase and maintenance. As a result of the longevity of fine arts support within this district, the program has accumulated a healthy supply of school instruments that are well-maintained for student use. The program also maintains a large music library and inventory of concert tuxedos and dresses.

All students in the Pinewood orchestra are expected to pay a $100 orchestra fee to cover cost of a yearly t-shirt, transportation for events, and additional maintenance and supplies. Students are asked to pay this at the beginning of the school year, and then are seldom requested to provide addition funds throughout the school year. In the 2020-2021 school year, the fee was reduced to $50 due to the COVID limitations on activities. Despite the fee, students are not prohibited from participating in orchestra if they are unable to pay. Ms. B explains: “We tell them “this is the fee,” knowing most of them will pay it. But then yeah, we do have the few who, for financial reasons, can't and we don't really, like pursue [the fee].”

The Pinewood orchestra cluster also has a shared parent booster organization that raises money to supplement students’ “orchestra fee” and also offer discounted private instruction through student scholarships. The booster club is run by a small yet dedicated collection of orchestra parents; in fact, many parents remain involved with the booster organization past their child’s graduation from high school. According to Ms. B, the booster club “has money in the bank” so that the orchestra is not wanting for any equipment or supplies. One such purchase this year was the $3,000 investment in recording equipment for UIL.

Shifting Landscape

Both students and teachers suggested a decline in the orchestra program that paralleled the overall shifting landscape of Pinewood HS. Jacob mentioned that he noticed “a lot of trophies around the room,” suggesting a competitively stronger program in the past. Ms. B talked a bit from her perspective as moving from being a student to a teacher:

> Ms. B: Everything just kind of seems a little bit like it's not as competitive, I guess is the only way to put it into words.
>
> Kelsey: So it's not like people are trying less. They're just maybe not achieving as much?
>
> Ms. B: Yeah! From my point of view, it’s like “whoa.” I think for the kids, we are still going to UIL, we're still doing all of this [competitive stuff], and we're still successful. You know, they don't know the difference from when I was here.

Eli admitted “over the past couple of years [the orchestra] has just dropped” and pondered whether there was a relationship between the shifting demographics of the school and the overall quality of the orchestra program.

COVID Orchestra Structure

Students had the option to select from three different levels of engagement in orchestra during this school year. The most straight-forward options were in-person school attendance or fully virtual schooling. A hybrid option allowed for virtual students interested in participating in the UIL C&SR Evaluation to begin attend weekly after school rehearsals in the Spring semester. Students in the top ensemble had the ability to opt-in to a year-long hybrid option. These students attended in-person rehearsals that began 30 minutes before the school day, lasted through the scheduled orchestra period, and concluded with enough time for virtual students to return home to Zoom into the remainder of the school day. Liam, who engaged only in the

additional UIL rehearsals, explained the set-up:

> It's usually just like zooming in every morning, cameras on. Our director has a really good setup. Yeah, he has like a really good camera, really good mic. We can't see the orchestra, but we can see him conducting, we can see his like metronome and stuff. And then we do have, we often do have rehearsals, in person, like after school before school every week. And those are when a lot of virtual kids can come in too. And that's mainly like, as a orchestra class, the main interactions we have.

While rehearsing in-person, students were seated in broad arcs in the orchestra room 6-feet apart with their own individual stands, removing the quintessential stand partner experience. In previous school years, all orchestra teachers would greet students as they entered the classroom each period creating welcoming environment leading to both peer and teacher interactions. This year, freshman and students who moved ensembles were slower to develop relationships with their peers and teachers due to the restrained environment.

COVID Competitions

Due to COVID-19 many of the annual competitive events were cancelled or heavily altered during the 2020-2021 school year. Many regions in Texas held All-Region auditions at the high school level to provide students a pathway to engage in the All-State process. In these cases, students undertook the same rigorous audition process knowing there was a likelihood that they would never have the opportunity to perform in either an All-Region or All-State ensemble during the 2020-2021 school year. Teachers within Pinewood's TMEA region collectively decided to not hold All-Region auditions during the pandemic school year, therefore students did not participate. Additionally, in the Fall semester, each region had the option to decide whether or not they would hold an in-person or virtual UIL Concert & Sight-Reading Evaluation during the Spring of 2021. Pinewood was able to select the option to participate in a

virtual UIL which required teachers to submit single-take, unedited videos of the stage performance and a sight-reading performance. To ensure compliance with the procedure, teachers had to coordinate to have an unaffiliated music teacher present to proctor the sight-reading element.

Participant Overview

In this section, I introduce the six student participants through participant "portraits."

Table 4.2

Participant Details

	Cindy	Claudia	Eli	Liam	Jacob	Serena
Year	Junior	Sophomore	Senior	Junior	Senior	Senior
Instrument	Violin	Violin	Violin	Cello	Viola	Cello
Ensemble	1st	2nd	1st	1st	3rd	1st
Private Lessons	Since 7th grade	In 9th grade only	In 11th grade only	Since 10th grade	Never	In 11th grade only
School Format	Hybrid	Virtual	Hybrid	Hybrid	In-Person	Hybrid

The participant portraits provide biographical information about each participant to situate their voices and experiences. Each portrait includes aspects of personality description, family biography, and formative musical experiences. Additionally, I begin each portrait with a found poem assembled from *in vivo* quotations drawn from my conversations with each student participant to develop evocative "snapshots." Table 4.2 shows basic participant information

Liam

I'm a lot more secluded than the majority of the student body,
I met my closest friends in orchestra.

Cello's a fun place to improvise on stuff,
Me and a friend had composed songs.

Music is still a big part of my life,
But is this something I want to do to stay alive?

Recently I feel more on my Black side,
[I'm] embracing a new side of myself with new people.

Me after quarantine is a better person,
I was getting burnt out.

In our conversations, Liam always had a calm presence and provided contemplative responses. While Liam described himself as being "very, very lazy" when it comes to school, he is clearly bright and ambitious. He admits that he has "let the zeros stack up" when it comes to "busy work," but always manages to recover his grade by doing well on the major assignments. During our conversations, we often drifted to discussing current events, including policy surrounding state-mandated testing and a recently lifted mask mandate in the state of Texas.

Liam has a white father and a Black mother and describes himself as a "white and Black individual." His parents have been divorced for about half his life and he currently lives with his dad in order to have more space to focus on school, which he attends virtually. Previously, he lived in a multi-generational household with his mom, grandparents, and two siblings. Liam is the middle child; he has a strong relationship with his older sister, but his two siblings have a closer relationship with each other due to their shared experience of identifying as transgender. Even though Liam is less close to his siblings than they are with each other, he has developed a

closer relationship with his older sister throughout “quarantine” and the two share a group of mutual friends.

Music comes naturally to Liam. He admits that “a lot of things just kind of set me up for orchestra pretty well.” Such abilities include perfect pitch, the ability to memorize music easily, and his large hands—Liam stands at 6 feet, 4 inches. At one point, Liam saw himself as a future music education major in college, but over quarantine he came to the realization that he did not have as much internal motivation to continue his cello playing without the structure of orchestra.

Because Liam has been living with his dad during COVID, he is not currently in his school neighborhood. As a result, he was participating in orchestra virtually in the fall semester and then opted-in for UIL with the twice-weekly rehearsals. In previous years, he regularly participated in both All-Region and Solo & Ensemble events and had even participated in the rigorous All-State audition process during his sophomore year.

Eli

I was in the back of the second violin,
Everybody could tell, “yo, you’re pretty good”

I was playing my butt off,
I never got rewarded for it.

There’s always a stereotype,
There’s no diversity in the front row.

Junior year he still doesn’t place me up,
I was just sitting, just playing.

All-Region led me to become concertmaster,
And that still got me mad.

When I asked Eli to describe himself at the beginning of our first conversation, he stated "it's kind of counterintuitive to call yourself humble," capturing a level of self-awareness that manifested throughout all of our conversations. Eli was in many ways the most eager to participate in this study, but also due to his job at a local computer/electronics store. "I'm an 18-year-old, with only two or three things to really worry about in life: school, work and family." In addition to balancing "school, work, and family," Eli discussed having many friend groups with whom he socialized regularly pre-COVID. Following our last interview, on one of his rare days off work, he was heading to meet up and play basketball with a group of his "boys."

Eli openly discussed both financial and health struggles his family faced in the past. Both of his parents were Ethiopian refugees who met in Europe during the 1990s; his parents were eventually able to receive visas to settle within the U.S. Due to ongoing mental health challenges, his mother no longer works and received federal disability. Eli's father does not have a large presence within the household, often working night shifts and sleeping during the day. Eli is not sure what type of job his dad has, and feels as if "most of the [money] just disappears."

As a young child, Eli enjoyed watching old cartoons—such as Tom & Jerry—with his father. He recalled seeing instruments on the show and becoming intrigued with the realistic animation and sound of the piano. At the time, he "didn't even think [he could] ask [his] parents about it," but jumped at the opportunity to pick up an instrument when it was offered through school in 6th grade. Eli humorously divulged that when he was in fifth grade he had the belief that playing band instruments led to lung cancer; in hindsight he attributes this false assumption to his asthma.

Lending credibility to his humility, it was not until the second interview that Eli admitted that he was the concertmaster of his orchestra for the past two school years. Eli's work ethic extended into orchestra: "I take everything when it comes to the violin seriously." As a freshman, he was in the second orchestra at Pinewood and worked incredibly hard to get promoted into the top orchestra the following school year. At the beginning of his Junior year, Mr. G convinced Eli to take violin lessons, which led him audition for All-Region orchestra for the first time. Eli was one of only two Pinewood violins to successfully audition into the All-Region orchestra that year.

Claudia

When I was little, I wasn't very intelligent,
I went to tutoring non-stop.

I used to be that kid in the back of the class,
But orchestra really did change my life.

The teacher always put me at front, I was good for some reason,
I really moved out of my shell.

My family has this little group chat in Mexico,
"How's Claudia and her violin?"

Me and my brother are the only ones born here in America,
My grandpa loved me for my violin.

Claudia was the first student I interviewed and was always the quickest to respond to email correspondence, reflecting her overall enthusiastic and optimistic personality. Claudia was the only student involved in the study who was completely virtual for all instruction and did not attend any of the offered in-person orchestra rehearsals or concerts. As a result, I got the impression that our conversations may have filled a void of teacher-student interactions

that the self-described “teacher’s pet” was missing. While talking, Claudia was always conscientious and intentional in shaping her responses, wanting to be helpful by providing a clear and detailed depiction of her experiences.

Claudia is a first-generation “American-Mexican” who lived with her two parents and older brother. She lives in a bilingual household; her father primarily communicates in Spanish, her brother primarily in English, and she and her mom communicate proficiently in both languages. In addition to being proud of her Mexican culture and heritage, Claudia is close with her family. She enjoys spending time playing games with her family and cooking Mexican food.

Claudia discussed having difficulty making friends at a younger age. She suggested that academic challenges in elementary school may have contributed to the distance she felt from her peers. In elementary school, she recalls attending tutoring, and she had difficulty passing state-mandated tests in the fourth grade, which left her feeling “dejected and really disappointed.” However, by sixth grade Claudia begin making better grades, and by high school she was enrolling in honors-level courses. In order to maintain her academic involvements, Claudia elected to take on an additional “zero hour” to have space for orchestra in her schedule.

As a fifth grader, Claudia was drawn to the “beautiful and flawless” sound of the orchestra and “always hated band for some reason,” blaming it on the dominating sounds of the brass instruments. Throughout middle school orchestra, Claudia was one of the strongest players in her junior high orchestra, often seated at or near the front. Before starting her freshman year, Claudia learned that she made the second orchestra at Pinewood. Realizing that she was enrolled in many rigorous courses, Claudia decided to “take it down a notch” in

orchestra so that she was not stretching herself too thin. Even though the music was easier in the third orchestra, she was able to be in a class with more of her friends from junior high and have the opportunity be in a "higher position."

In contrast to other participants, Claudia had a deeper connection to her identity as a violinist; "it's always my violin first." For her, orchestra was a vehicle to play the violin, but she was also driven to play the violin outside of school and learn how to play traditional Spanish songs. Just having her violin unpacked at home brought her comfort, being able to see that "it's there and it's visible and it's living."

Jacob

I'm usually a pretty quiet person,
I just talk to people I'm comfortable around.

I really like watching anime,
It's something that'll bring your emotions all together.

Football is a big part of me,
I try to help the younger guys get ready.

The band comes to all of our games,
I can't help but think I like our music better.

I know the viola is not the most heard instrument,
But it brings out other parts of the pieces too.

Jacob was the final student participant to reach out to me and join the study, but was eager to participate. His warm and compassionate demeanor was a welcomed presence in our conversations where he offered soft-spoken and concise responses. Jacob's interest in anime and sports was evident through the visible decor of his room, and he often donned a football jersey during our conversations. Currently, Jacob lives with his mother, stepfather, and younger

sister, but has also lived with his grandmother for a period of his childhood. He describes his family as being close, but they "don't really express it that way." Throughout high school, Jacob held a few different jobs, but quit when the pandemic started; however, he started working again during the time of this study and he ended up needing to reschedule our final interview so that he could attend onboarding for his new job at Home Depot.

Football is a central part of Jacob's high school experience and is a way that he met many important people in his adolescence. His stepdad was once a sixth-grade basketball coach, and Jacob aspires to be a football coach himself one day. Even now, Jacob enjoys being able to "help the younger guys" whether in football or in orchestra. As an upperclassman, Jacob has been consistently at the front of his section in orchestra, a responsibility he took seriously. Jacob did not want to be "outplayed" in orchestra, an attitude he admits: "I feel like it's a sport side of me that just gets competitive with stuff."

Jacob recalled hearing the band and orchestra perform in the gym in fifth grade; while many of his friends were interested in band, he "didn't really like how loud it was." The orchestra played a song that he recognized from the movie *Frozen* and had a "pretty calming" sound, leading him to decide to join orchestra. When it came to selecting instruments, Jacob wanted to play something that would fill in a gap in the ensemble:

> I saw no one had picked the viola yet to play, so I just said "If you need a viola" and I just went ahead and picked the viola. I just, I didn't know much about the instruments back then.

Serena

I don't know what would be considered the "typical American,"
But I don't really think it's me.

First gen kids have to work hard,
Your parents came from nothing.

They didn't know what a cello was,
I didn't grow up being put into lessons.

But I know people who have,
They don't look like me.

We need to stop having this stereotypical orchestra kid,
Duh, you can be Black in orchestra.

Most of my conversations with Serena were first thing in the morning when we both suffered from some mental fog. Even so, we had rich conversations characterized by her introspective nature and deep interest in contemporary social issues. Serena had some of the most developed and articulated impressions of the complex nature of race in the U.S. At the same time, she is still a teenager with a variety of pastimes: "I like puzzles, I listen to a lot of music. I like discovering new artists. I like TikTok, I hate to admit it." Throughout the semester, Serena has been involved in the college application process, which has also been shaped by her varied interests. When I asked what she was interested in majoring in, she at first said "biochem,"but then admitted she was considering other pathways including "math major, computer science, public policy, political science, [and] sociology."

Serena's parents are both Ethiopian refugees, which shapes a large part of her personal identity. During our first conversation she talked about wanting to embrace her Ethiopian culture "the best [she] can." For example, her mother recently taught her how to perform a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony. This "first-gen" identity also drives her approach to school: "I know that not only like [did] my parents not have [opportunities] but I know a lot of other people don't have access to what I have access to, so I sort of utilize that in a way."

Coincidentally, Eli is a distantly related to Serena.

When it came to joining orchestra, Serena was hesitant to admit that she mostly joined because a friend suggested it.

> I didn't really put much thought into it and then my friend was like, “okay, like we can all do this together” and it was like this cool thing. And so, I went to like the string drive or whatever where, you know, I tried out different instruments, and I tried cello and I was like “oh I really like this.”

At first, she “didn’t expect to do [orchestra] beyond sixth grade,” but then found she was ”already in it” and did not want to quit. Over time, this passive inertia turned into an enjoyment and commitment to orchestra.

Even though she enjoys playing the cello, Serena is still invested in the communal and experiential aspects of orchestra. She talked vividly about the more intangible moments of orchestra, such as the joy of “collectively making music together” and waiting outside the door for UIL sight-reading. Many of her reflections of orchestra were steeped in a warm nostalgia, partially due to the ways COVID has changed orchestra and also by the fact that this is her senior year of high school.

Cindy

My approach is I’ll sleep when I’m dead,
It's a future Cindy problem.

My mom had a friend who had a violin,
And now I’m a violin player.

For quarantine it’s such a drag to get the violin out,
Hopefully I'll rekindle my love with music next year.

I don’t look Asian but I also don’t look Black,
I feel like I'm leading a double life.

When you're mixed,
you never have the same experience.

All conversations with Cindy lasted longer than planned; she had an emphatic speaking style, leading to entertaining and intricate anecdotes. Occasionally, to emphasize her point, Cindy provided direct advice to a nonexistent audience: “Orchestra is definitely elite, guys, join orchestra. It's a very good experience.” We often meandered off-topic in our conversations, with diversions including the problematic nature of school dress codes and junk food—“if it has preservatives in it, I love it.”

While casting herself as a “classic teen,” Cindy’s ambition and achievement were evident. In addition to a rigorous AP and dual-credit course load, Cindy is heavily involved in numerous organizations, including academic decathlon, Girl Scouts, and district-level student committees. As her junior year comes to an end, Cindy is preoccupied with trying to figure out her future college and career plans. Cindy is feeling burned out by the high-achieving “grind” of high school and struggling to settle on a college path; while part of her admits “a state school sounds really nice” she knows that she has put in the hard work in high school and does not want to settle. Recently, she started working at a local sandwich shop in addition to tutoring a few neighborhood kids to save money for college and applications.

Cindy lives with her two parents and younger sister, with whom she shares a bedroom. Her mother is ethnically Chinese and came to the United States as a refugee from Vietnam, where she had been living prior to her arrival in California as a teenager. Her father is Black with family in New Orleans, and her parents met while working together in California. Cindy’s mother still has many close friends and family members in California, where the family owns a residence and spends a substantial amount of time during school breaks. Cindy feared sounding

"pretentious" when she brought up the "summer house" and later quoted her mother to say "we live below our means." During the school year, the family of four lives in a 2-bedroom apartment.

When she was trying to decide as a fifth grader whether to join band or orchestra, Cindy recalled her babysitter raving to her mom about summer band camp; in that moment, Cindy knew she "did not want to march in the Texas heat." At first, Cindy wanted to play cello because she felt cello players had "cool girl vibes," but her mother was worried that she would be too small to play the cello. Plagued by her "serially indecisive" nature, Cindy left the instrument selection event undecided. However, when it came to light that her mother's friend had an unused violin to give the family, the decision was made.

> I had a good time in orchestra. Like, was Middle School disgusting? Yes. 1,000%. Like, you would have to pay me at least a million dollars to make me redo those two years in my life. But orchestra was always so fun, like I had all my friends and I made new friends. […] It was just a positive environment there. Like we used to eat in the orchestra room. Yeah, so pretty, pretty fun.

Lately, Cindy has struggled to have the same enthusiasm for orchestra due to the shifts related to COVID-19. Cindy admits she is the "least competitive" person and does not have interest in participating in individual music competitions. When Cindy moved into the second violin section during high school, she was relieved to have a more laid-back role in the ensemble. She described the ethos of her orchestra as "play to win" and questions the extent to which she enjoys playing anymore or just continues because she "already made the commitment."

Chapter Summary

In the preceding sections, I provided a description of the Pinewood school community,

orchestra program, and introduced readers to the study. The Treeland district, located on the fringe of a large urban city in Texas, has experienced demographic fluctuations over the past two decades resulting in a racially diverse suburban district. I provided rich participant portraits to help to contextualize the findings of this study. In the following chapter, I discuss the emergent themes from my data analysis along with supporting participant quotations.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

In this chapter I present findings from my data analysis and interpretation. Through an inductive process of coding and categorizing, I developed the following emergent themes: Belonging, Racial Status Quo, and Meaningful Aspects of Orchestra. I begin this chapter by restating the research purpose and related questions followed by the three themes. Each theme opens with a general description then I discuss each sub-category with supporting participant quotations.

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to explore how racially underrepresented students perceive race within an urban characteristic high school orchestra program through the lens of critical race theory. Critical race theory is a tool to challenge dominant discourses and identify covert mechanisms perpetuating racial inequity (Calmore, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Milner, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). I developed a composite counter-story (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) to examine the racialized experience of school orchestra told from the perspective of students of color with a particular interest on competition.

Research Questions

(1) How do racially minoritized students perceive the role of racial identity in their lives and in the context of orchestra?

(2) How do racially minoritized students experience racial tensions in an urban characteristic high school? How are these manifested within the orchestra program?

(3) How does individual competition and comparison-based assessment shape racially minoritized students' orchestra experience?

(4) How do racially minoritized students ascribe meaning to their high school orchestra experiences?

Theme 1: Belonging

Over our conversations, students discussed the student community of both Pinewood and the orchestra program, noting an overwhelming sense of "diversity." Depending on context, students used the term "diversity" to encompass many aspects of student identity—academic commitment, extracurricular involvement, cultural practices—but overwhelmingly students discussed the relevance of racial diversity at Pinewood. Students recognized the unique make-up of the Pinewood student body, which served as a reference point when discussing sense of belonging. This theme examines both spatial and social factors that shape students' sense of belonging in school.

"I'm glad it's diverse:" Diversity of Pinewood

Within this category, I share students' perceptions of diversity at Pinewood and the role it has in shaping students' sense of belonging within educational spaces. I began the second interview for all student participants asking how they would describe "Pinewood"; all participants unanimously employed the adjective "diverse" within their depiction. However, participants defined diversity differently, encompassing aspects of personal identity and student interests in addition to racial and ethnic identity. For Serena and Jacob, they saw diversity as referring to students' race as well as extracurricular activities. Liam talked about variation in student sexual orientation, level of school investment, and economic status as part

of his understanding of diversity. Eli, in contrast, was only speaking of student race when discussing the level of diversity within different contexts of the Pinewood campus.

> Jacob: Very diverse. Like, you can go look at any type of clubs or organizations, you'll see all different kinds of students age, race. Just whatever you prefer to do […] But usually you'll just see everyone in certain places really diverse, especially with the electives; anyone anywhere. (Interview 2)

Serena also talked about how the racial and ethnic diversity translated into a variety of student cultural heritages and traditions present at Pinewood as well. With her perspective as a first-generation Ethiopian American, it makes sense that Serena was more closely attuned to the ways in which students' heritage may shape their perspective and experience.

> Serena: You can meet people that come from just about everywhere. And like not everyone's background or like story's going to be the same. Which I think it's really cool. I feel, yeah, that'd be a main thing, just like diverse and like everyone's their own different person. I can't really find people that are like exactly the same; there's always something different about someone. (Interview 2)

Many of the participants expressed gratitude for being able to attend such a vibrant school community. For some students, they expressed the ways in which the racial diversity helped make it so that they did not "stick out." While others talked emphasized how diversity manifested in the variety of social groups and academic opportunities available.

> Liam: Pinewood high school is definitely a diverse pool with plenty opportunities for people of all interests to explore. It's a good community. It's a, it's a great, it's definitely a great school and I'm definitely fortunate to be there. Has a really good programs except for some sports. But, like the football, but it's overall a great school, a great community for a lot of different identities.(Interview 2)

Eli recognized the uniqueness of the racial diversity of Pinewood not only on a local level, but in comparison to popular images of schools as well.

> Eli: Pretty much everybody's [at Pinewood] honestly. Like every sort of ethnic group and race and whatnot, is at Pinewood. You can see the Desi population the, Asian population, African, Latino, European. Literally every single type of person…and for the

> size of the school, it's pretty cool you know. Like, especially with our district you would see [other high school]… I've heard that it's predominantly white….but for sure Pinewood is the most diverse that I've ever seen from like TV and everything. (Interview 2)

Even though most students expressed gratitude towards the prevailing diversity of the student body, Cindy also felt that this may have eroded a sense of cohesion or unity among the campus: "the one thing that we have in common is that we go to Pinewood, but if you took Pinewood out of that, we wouldn't really have much in common."

Both Claudia and Cindy discussed having attended schools that had a predominantly white student population at earlier points in their education. Cindy talked at length about how attending a predominantly white high school shaped her perceptions of belonging and preference for being in a more diverse setting at Pinewood.

> Cindy: Oh, we're very mixed school […] Yeah, I like it, I like it. I've been in predominantly white schools but I've also—like I go to Pinewood too, so I like that better. But at the same time, I don't know, yeah.
>
> Kelsey: What makes you like it better? Tell me a little bit more about why you're [on] both sides?
>
> Cindy: Okay. So, whenever I went to elementary school I went to a predominantly like white school […] it's like right down the street, like little tiny neighborhood. All the kids, all the suburb kids move there with their parents, you know, like it's just a bunch of white kids.
>
> But yeah, like, I was definitely the only mixed [person] in my grade. And there was only maybe like two or three other kids [of color] that lived in the neighborhood, because our school would also like get kids that were overflow students. And they would mostly be, they would mostly be Black, from like other schools, but then it's like inconsistent though. Like some years, you would have kids from overflow that were minority, but then there would be gone the next year…So it wasn't really like the same as going to Pinewood, where those kids aren't overflow kids. But at the same time it's like Pinewood also is way bigger; like the parameters for each one is different…so I don't know if it's right to compare them both, just because the like population class size doesn't really match up. But yeah, I mean you get the point?

> Kelsey: Yeah, I'm going to still ask some more questions about it though. So, how did you feel different though? Because you said like “I like it better now”…How does being in a more diverse space versus being in a whiter space like feel different to you?
>
> Cindy: I mean, being in a whiter space, definitely gives me a lot of like, confusion, and also, I didn't really feel like off the bat like I fit in because there's no like Asian and black people. Like there's just not a group; there's just not a large enough group to be like, that's my people, you know. And there wasn't very many Asian kids, either so it wasn't like I could just be like, “Oh yeah!.” Because I don't look Asian, but I also don't look Black. So, I'm Black, but not Black enough? So, it's kind of like everybody's kind of confused. But then, like, white kids...[with] white kids I feel like you're just “not white.” Like you're just like, like they don't see you as not being like Black enough or not being Asian enough because they're white. I don't know...because I've never like it's, it's just different. Like I've never felt like I have like a group or like I've been able to like fully identify with, like, one or the other, you know. So, I guess, being in a white space kind of like confused you, because I just want to fit in and I just wanna make friends. (Interview 2)

Embedded within this reflection of her elementary school, Claudia addresses the tacit association of suburbs with whiteness and how this led to a sense of “confusion” and sense of isolation as a young child. Unlike her elementary school, which had a predominantly white community, Pinewood’s racial diversity provided the opportunity to interact with more peers that may share similar experiences. Cindy also recognizes the inherent privilege afforded to white students who do not face the burden of navigating racially liminal position. Cindy found that white peers conceptualized of racial identity as a binary trait, which further reflects their privileged position.

Even though the student body was very racially diverse at Pinewood, some students noted that this same level of diversity was not reflected among the teacher population.

> Serena: I’ve mainly had like white teachers with like a Black teacher, an Asian teacher, you know. But yeah, like, a majority of my teachers in general have always been white. So yeah, but I do feel like there definitely still is like diversity within like the faculty here. Maybe just not as much as students. (Interview 2)
>
> Claudia (Interview 3) also mentioned that she has had “usually white teachers,”

especially when it came to AP classes, but having Ms. B—a fellow Mexican-American—was meaningful and motivated her to challenge herself further in orchestra.

"Unicorn" Orchestra: Racial Composition of Orchestra

While students noted how orchestra was not as racially diverse as the Pinewood campus student body, they were aware that the Pinewood orchestra was more diverse than other high schools. Liam talks about how the Pinewood orchestra is a “unicorn” in terms of the level of diversity present:

> I feel like [Pinewood] orchestras are just filled with just a lot of types of people in all different places. Like you're not gonna see one big majority—you're not going to see like the huge majority of a type of person in the orchestra. (Interview 3)

However, he admits that when he thinks of orchestras in general and programs at other schools, he considers them to be “very white organizations.” Cindy echoed this sentiment, when she talked about seeing other high school orchestra programs at the yearly ensemble adjudication.

> I feel like [our teachers] do a really good job of making sure there's like a lot of different types of kids. And like, they include everybody. […] I think the only time [I noticed] was whenever we would go to like UIL, and then you see the other groups, and then they would be all white. And you're just like, “oh.” And then you kind of realize, like, this is not normal? Which is kind of sad. But like, our situation is definitely an outlier. (Interview 3)

Seeing the prevailing whiteness of other high school orchestra programs brought into contrast the uniqueness of the racial diversity present within the Pinewood orchestras. At the same time, most students saw ways that the orchestra program could still be more evenly representative. For Eli, orchestra was actually one of the few spaces within school that his racial identity stood out as unique: “we don’t really talk about the whole diversity problem, because

it's really only in orchestra" (Interview 3). In contrast to most of Eli's classes and the campus at large, orchestra was a space where he felt there was a recognizable under-representation of Latinx and Black students. Many students also observed ways in which they noticed variation in racial representation based on placement within the orchestra hierarchy; I will be discussing this in greater depth within the following theme.

Along with acknowledging disproportional representation of Latinx and Black students in orchestra, some students talked about how the racial make-up of an organization may have an impact on students' decision to participate. Serena and Claudia both discuss how not seeing yourself within a certain space—such as orchestra—may have influence on some students' decision to join or persist.

> Kelsey: I mean, obviously you know there's data that shows like the majority of people in professional orchestras are white—like what you said, this is something that we visually see. Do you feel like that has an impact on whether or not students [of color] choose to participate in orchestra?
>
> Claudia: I feel like maybe so. Because, I mean at least I didn't base my decision off of that, or look into what or what race usually plays stringed instruments or when you look at an orchestra, what type of ethnicities, are you going to see, or, what are you going to observe. Um, I personally don't look at that, um, when trying to do something, or being a part of an organization. I think if it's just, if I'm good enough to do it, then I will be accepted in it and my, my color my ethnicity should have nothing to do with it. And same for other people like it shouldn't be based on race or anything like that. (Interview 3)

Claudia, like several other student participants, says that she did not take into consideration the racial identity of orchestra members when joining. In fact, most participants did not even come to recognize an existing racial association of orchestra with whiteness until several years into their orchestra experience (see "I didn't realize there was a stereotype" for further discussion). At the same time, she implies that some students may weigh this consideration more heavily.

Serena also discussed perceptions of belonging based on visible representation within an organization.

> Serena: I guess just when the same people in the community are joining something, it encourages other people within that community to also join. And so, if you see like a predominantly like Asian group or predominantly white group, more Asian and white people are gonna want to join it just because they see people that look like them, and then like you know are similar to them, but also because of that, like, you're not seeing a lot of like other like minorities. Yeah, so it's kind of like discouraging to join because it's like, “oh these people aren't really like me” or “I don't see myself like in this group” so I don't, I wouldn't feel like accepted or I wouldn't feel like I belonged in this group. (Interview 2)

Not only does Serena discuss how it can be “discouraging” to join an activity in which you do not see yourself represented, but she also explicitly labels the prominence of white and Asian students that she sees within the orchestral setting. From her perspective, students who identify as white and Asian comprise the privileged racial groups, rendering Black and Latinx students as subordinate in the context of orchestra.

"It's always on your subconscious:" Perceptions of Racial Belonging

The backdrop of diversity among the entire Pinewood student body created a standard against which participants compared settings within the Pinewood campus. Students discussed spaces in which they witnessed different levels of representation of Black and Latinx students—higher participation in athletics in contrast to lower representation in AP classes and higher levels of the orchestra program. These observed differences influenced students’ actions and perception of belonging.

Within the group interview, students discussed how the relative diversity of Pinewood created an environment in which students did not feel they “stick out.” Cindy and Claudia, in particular, contrasted this experience to being in predominantly white settings earlier in their

education.

Kelsey: how much is your racial identity on your mind as you're interacting, moving in the world, and specifically in school?

Cindy: Um, I mean, I obviously can't speak for everybody else. But personally, I feel like at Pinewood, we're definitely lucky enough to where it's not a predominantly white school. Like, we're a very diverse, like, very, very diverse school. So I think it's a lot less prominent, or obvious that you stick out because everybody else is similar to you, or looks like you, or acts like you, or grew up in the same area as you…there definitely are times you're just like, you know, like [you have] that white people moment. But I think like, it's, it's different, depending on where you are. Like, if it's really prominent, like if you are the only person of color at your school, if you're the only person of color wherever you go, then you're going to tend to stick out. And race is going to be something that you are going to be constantly thinking of. But for me, I guess it's not really that much on my mind. Because everybody here is really similar to each other.

Serena: Yeah, I agree. And I also feel like, um, yeah, like if you're, if you grew up in an area that's predominantly white, or just, you know, like, there's not a lot of people that look like you or are from the same place as you, yeah, you're gonna stick out. But I also feel like, it's a little on the people that you choose to sort of surround yourself with and like, the groups that you choose to join. Because if you, I don't know, like, if there was like a club that you wanted to join, and a lot of people were white, you're gonna stick out there. But at least like, I don't know, like, for me, like, the friend group that I have, you know, you I feel like you pick and choose your friends and the friends that like I choose, either look like me or they're different, but they're not different in a way that it makes me feel like I have to think about my own racial identity. Like, I feel like, we're all different in a way where we can like bond, and like, collectively just kind of, you know, talk about things that we've all sort of, like, we might not, like, go through the same exact things, but they're all like very similar. They fall under this like umbrella of like, similar situations. Yeah. I don't know what I was where I was going with that. But like, yeah,

Claudia: I feel more comfortable seeing when seeing if people of color are around me, more than seeing usually white. Because growing up, I always went to a daycare, and it was usually all white kids. And me and my brother, were the only Hispanics really or people of color. And, um, I mean, it was kind of different, because they kind of looked at you. And well, it was just a crazy experience that I had to grow up in. I've had a little girl correct my Spanish before, whenever I was in that daycare. And I mean, I've had a lot of different experiences of stuff like that of white people saying, you know, their comments or things like that, but I just look back and laugh at it really. Um in school, it's more comfortable because you're surrounded by [diversity]; there's a lot of diverse people in school.

Within this interaction, Serena expressed the importance of surrounding herself with a group of friends that understood each other and were able to empathize with racialized experiences even if they might not go through the "same exact things." Several other students discussed holding friendships with students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds and the importance of holding the "same beliefs" (Cindy, Interview 3). At the same time, Cindy, Liam, and Serena all discussed the importance of being able to unpack and discuss topics of race and racism with their friends who had "similar experiences" (Liam, Interview 3).

Within the third interview, I asked participants again to discuss the extent to which they felt their racial identity was present on their mind within the context of school. Cindy reiterated how the diversity makes it so that she thinks about her race less, but admits it is always "in your subconscious."

> Kelsey: Are there certain situations in which you feel like you are more aware—like your racial identity is more present on your mind than other situations?
>
> Cindy: Like at school? Um, I guess? I mean, I guess not really for me, I can't really think of an instance. It's always kind of like in your subconscious, but like, it's not really like a…I can't like remember, but I'm sure I'm sure I have, but I can't really like say...
>
> Kelsey: For instance, you just said like, when you're in these classes with certain teachers, you know, to not like…
>
> Cindy: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I just—you just don't really say anything. Just be quiet. It's just like, "don't say anything." Yeah, so I guess? but like, I, at school. Our school is pretty diverse. So it's not like, I stick out.
> Kelsey: Right.
>
> Cindy: So I mean, I don't know. I don't think so....I don't think so, I don't know!

The afterthought of relaying certain classes where you "don't say anything" reflects the level of normalization in experiencing subtle forms of racism within school. For Cindy, it is a given that there are teachers and classes in which you must temper your input based on an interpretation

of teachers' attitudes and beliefs. Much in the same way, Cindy struggles to identify specific instances in which she consciously considers her racial identity, admitting an ever-presence in her subconscious.

Eli brought up the ways in which the prominent diversity in Pinewood as a campus highlighted spaces that were less diverse. In classes where he was one of the few students of color, Eli had to balance a greater cognitive awareness of his racial identity—orchestra was one of these settings.

> With Orchestra, you would just be the only minority. But like in classes, especially, there's a lot of diversity…sometimes whenever I would go into, like, some special classes, there would be situations where I would be the only minority, but I wouldn't really like use that, to my advantage, you know, because there wouldn't really be an advantage...because you just have to use your mind more. […] Specifically with Orchestra, you can use that emotion to move you to the music and whatnot. But whenever it comes to education, it's honestly, I could see why it can be a distraction. Like, if it's, that's the only thing that's running through your head, then you're gonna have a hard time learning and doing whatever they're doing. (Interview 3)

In contrast to academic classes, Eli felt that he could constructively channel the energy associated with being a visible "minority" member into the emotional aspect of his playing in orchestra. Even though Eli claimed a constructive benefit to this awareness, his comments suggest how this could be potentially distracting and deter from his performance in other educational spaces. At the same time, his statement also belies the level of emotionality associated with being a visible racial minority within the space of orchestra for Eli.

"Welcome and wanted:" Teachers Foster Belonging

Teacher actions and attitudes helped to shape the extent to which students were invested and engaged in a class. In the context of orchestra, students identified several practices that fostered a welcoming environment. Teacher participants also discussed the

intentional practices they incorporated to cultivate classroom community and inclusivity.

From the student perspective, orchestra teachers largely fostered inclusivity through meaningful interpersonal interactions. Additionally, students developed a comfort-level with orchestra teachers as a result of the duration of the relationship. Claudia and Serena found it meaningful how teachers took the time to get to know individual students.

> Claudia: all the directors at least from where I am, they try to get to know you first. Even the directors…that are not directing you, they get to know you. Like I know [Mr. G], who knows me; he asked me how I am and everything, so all of them try to build a relationship with you so that's what's really making you feel welcome and wanted. (Interview 3)

In addition to developing personal relationships with students, orchestra teachers were also invested in supporting students' musicianship through personalized feedback. Ms. B talked about the intentional decision to hold one-on-one playing assessments with all of her students regularly throughout the year. This procedure was a shift in her previous practice of sending individual students out of class to perform their assessments for one of the other two orchestra teachers.

> I just I really wanted to be the one to listen to them. Not that I don't trust [Mrs. S and Mr. G's] grading. I want to hear how they're doing […] So, I think I'll stick with even though it's like it makes me come in earlier and have to stay later. I think next year, I'll probably stick with the doing it before and after school. I could listen to them. And then I could give them individual feedback. And I think it just gives me more of that one-on-one time, since it is a big class. (Interview 2)

Later in our conversation, Ms. B talked about how the one-on-one assessments also provided a time in which she could check in with students on a social-emotional level.

Both Jacob and Claudia—the only two student participants who had Ms. B as a primary teacher—mentioned how the individual playing assessments really helped support their development as a musician and also feel invested in as a student. For Claudia, even though

playing assessments were “nerve wracking for most of the times,” it was a time for her to get “tips and advice” that helped improve her playing (Interview 2).

Orchestra teachers were also seen as understanding and accommodating of students’ busy schedules.

> Cindy: I feel like Mr. G is really good about communication. If you tell him, like I have a problem or, I have a conflict in my schedule or whatever reason and you communicate that issue with him, then he is so like adaptable and flexible. But I know a lot of teachers that are not like that at all. (Interview 2)

Many orchestra students, like Cindy, often juggled academic obligations, school organizations, and work schedules that occasionally conflicted with outside-of-school rehearsals. Ms. B also talked about how the orchestra teachers worked with athletic faculty at the school to arrange for students to be able to engage fully with both activities without conflict. However, Mrs. S observed an increasing number of students who are juggling commitments outside of school—jobs and household duties—and she would occasionally assist students in talking to their employers to arrange availability for rehearsals.

Students also appreciated how their orchestra teachers coupled compassionate interactions with high musical expectations for individual students and the ensembles. Jacob characterized his orchestra teacher, Ms. B, as “nice” but able to “get things done” (Interview 2), and Liam felt the environment of orchestra was “laid back but not unproductive” (Group Interview). Serena spoke directly about the high standards in orchestra:

> Mr. G expects a lot out of us, which I think is a good thing. I feel like it's good to expect—have high expectations for people because, you know, like, it kind of shows that you believe that they're capable of doing a lot. And I feel like all of us are very capable of doing a lot. And so I feel like yeah, like he, he does have very high expectations of us as a group and also us as individual players. (Interview 3)

"Sense of community:" Peer Relationships in Orchestra

Efforts on the part of orchestra teachers helped foster an inclusive environment in the class and develop a sense of community. Most student participants discussed having close friendships with other orchestra members, and a sense of collective purpose helped unite them with their peers. According to Cindy, orchestra was “just small enough to where everybody can like sort of know everybody. [But] just big enough to where it's not like a tight knit group” (Interview 3). Jacob described students in orchestra as “friendly and open to other people” (Interview 3)—a sentiment echoed by all participants.

Unlike other classes, students strongly connected with the desire to make music together and the importance of shared investment in the final performance. Liam contrasted this to AP classes where you’re just working towards acing the test and meeting individual accomplishments and “no one cares at all” how other people perform (Group Interview). Jacob captured the essence of the collective nature of orchestra: “the one that one thing that brings us together is orchestra, so we all understand what's going on no matter what” (Interview 3)

Within the group interview, participants shared the ways in which the sense of community among students creates a space in which students can feel “less lonely,” especially in light of COVID-19 where many of the participants’ only face-to-face interaction with school was through orchestra.

> Cindy: I think it's just like less lonely. Especially now because we're all at home, like all the time, and you only see people that like, you make your like, you purposely want to see like your friends, your close family and stuff. So like going up to Orchestra is a lot less lonely. And it's like a sense of community and stuff.
>
> Serena: Yeah, I feel like, just kind of being around people that kind of are a bit similar to you. So like, you guys, like have things in common that y'all can connect with. But also, you meet like, so many different types of people to get to learn more about like,

> different people's like, backgrounds and upcoming like upbringings, and all that stuff. And it's also just fun to be around your friends for a class period. So yeah.
>
> Jacob: Yeah, I like going to orchestra, talking to my friends and playing the music. We all get better with the music that we play and hearing the different pieces, taking a break from like regular school, playing music instead. It's what I really like about Orchestra.

In addition to having a shared sense of purpose, many students mentioned how shared challenges within orchestra also created a point of bonding. Sometimes this came in the form of students struggling on the same music or moments of friction created by the directors. Liam mentioned a few incidents when Mr. G would get upset with the orchestra, which ultimately brought students together because they "all [got] to laugh about it in the end" (Group Interview).

Both Cindy and Serena expounded on the ways in which students bonded over collective challenges.

> Cindy: So it's like, it's just the way that the orchestra is set up. Like, you have your own section, you have your own group, and then it's like, the shared experience. I think, I feel like bad experiences kind of like unite us. Kind of cheesy, but they do. Like, it's like, um, like, if your director's you know, kind of, like, being a little cranky, you're like, "Oh," you know, like, "he was such a jerk today." Or, you know, your whole section doesn't understand a piece, you're like, "Oh, that's so bad!" Like, "I don't know what's going on." It's like, "haha," you know, we get to laugh with the group because nobody knows what's going on. Or nobody's like having a good day or like, it's just like a group thing, you know? (Group Interview)

Cindy perceived that the arrangement of the orchestra into sections helped create a built-in group for students to interact and connect. Additionally, being able to joke together about not knowing "what's going on" helped diffuse potential stress and tension. Serena talked more about the emotional connection created in orchestra.

> Serena: it's nice to, you know, have people that understand, like how you're feeling and like yeah, like, I feel like just yeah, having people there just sort of, I think, Cindy mentioned this on the group interview. But just like having people that you can, like

> joke around with or like, you know, if you're struggling on something, you can all struggle together and it's like this joke, you know, and like you can like, you know, like make light of the situation together. You don't have to be alone and like, deal with it by yourself. Like you have someone else there. And I feel like although that's a bit harder now [because of COVID-19]—it's still there and yeah, that's also another thing that I really like. (Interview 3)

Many students revealed that they developed relationships with some of their best friends during junior high orchestra. Even though students felt a sense of community with their orchestra peers, they did not necessarily develop new relationships with their classmates in high school. For the most part, they depicted peer interactions as cordial, and focused on the task at hand—orchestra. Jacob contrasted the close interpersonal relationships he developed in football to the social interactions he has in orchestra:

> I just go to class and then I don't really—I'll talk to them in class, but outside of school, we don't really talk. So it's not really on a personal level.
>
> Kelsey: Okay.
>
> Jacob: Mostly in class, kind of like, just a business in a way kind of.
>
> Kelsey: Oh, yeah. So it's kinda like everybody knows knows what their job is in Orchestra?
>
> Jacob: [Yeah], I don't really feel like I'm that [close] with that many [orchestra] people outside of school. (Interview 3)

Claudia talked about the experience of having "bad stands partners" and felt that "if you have friends [in orchestra], then you have friends" (Interview 3), but shared that there was not much peer-to-peer interaction outside of preexisting relationships. Claudia and Jacob were the only two student participants who were not in the top ensemble and seemed to sense less development of close student relationships in the class. Because students in the top ensemble have more rehearsal time than the other ensembles, it is possible they develop tighter bonds

with their orchestra peers.

Theme 1 Summary

Many of the participants expressed gratitude for being able to attend such a vibrant school community and some contrasted this to discomfort they experienced in less racially diverse educational settings. Students also recognized the ways in which the Pinewood orchestra was more racially diverse than other high school programs in their area and stereotypical images of orchestras. At the same time, students acknowledge how low representation of Black and Latinx students in orchestra could be discouraging to other students from these groups. Student participants also identified the importance of peer interactions and teacher efforts in promoting a welcoming environment in orchestra.

Theme 2: Racial Status Quo

By nature of talking about student race, large segments of our conversations dealt with the ways in which students confront and resist racialized experiences they encountered in educational settings. Students often refrained from directly restating experiences of racism and racial microaggressions, but conveyed the prevalence and persistence of such incidents. Through these stories, a commonality began to emerge surrounding the ways in which hegemonic structures coalesced to maintain status quo racial dynamics in school and orchestra. This theme explores how the structural functions of meritocracy, colorblind ideology, and normalized racism manifest on a local level to reinforce the racial status quo.

"It's not like nobody knows:" Normalization of Racism

Persistence of racism and racialized interactions with teachers and peers shaped

students' navigation of school spaces. Students recalled classroom incidents where teachers made "offhand comments" (Cindy, Interview 3) and peers using racial slurs. For the most part, students expressed the expectation that these experiences were just "gonna happen" (Jacob, Interview 3). In this section, I explore how students characterized racialized interactions they experienced within school and the manifestation of these experiences as commonplace.

During the group interview, the students talked at length about the racial dynamics among the students at Pinewood.

> Claudia: Um in school, it's more comfortable because you're surrounded by diverse—there's a lot of diverse people in school. And although some, some students don't really—How should I say it? [long pause] Well, I guess you could say just, particularly white students, sometimes they don't—Well, they don't see what they're saying, really hear what they're saying. I mean, I've been called a [derogatory term for a person of Mexican descent] before at Pinewood. So, it's all really different.
>
> Serena: I just want to add, like a quick thing. So, I feel like although the diversity is really good, I also feel like that within like other like ethnicities, like there's a lot of well, not a lot of, but there can be some, I guess like insensitivity towards other ethnicities. Like I feel like—yes, like it's diverse—but you also have to address like certain issues within the different ethnicities and how they treat other ethnicities and…how should I put this? […struggles to articulate thought…] okay, again, I like had an idea of like what I wanted to say in my head and it's just like not coming out the way that I wanted it to. I hope you understand what I'm getting at?
>
> Cindy: I totally get what you're trying to say—like 100% know what you're trying to say. It's not, it's not like, especially since we don't go to a predominantly white school, there aren't a lot of white people to be racist towards you. So, like there are a lot of different ways that other minority groups are. They're just like, really insensitive. […] you just kind of, what Claudia was saying, like, at the end of the day, you just have to laugh it off, because then you start to like, internalize it. And then it can be like, really harmful. But personally, I mean, I think you just have to be patient and like, teach the ignorant. Like, it's, I know, at the end, it's not my job, like, I shouldn't be having to teach you like you can't say those things. But nobody else is going to teach you obviously, if you've gone this far. So, you just have to be patient.
>
> Liam: going off of what Serena said, the things like Claudia was talking about, like a lot of like minority groups, they don't see that as a big of an issue as it really is. Like, it is one thing for like to be like, racially targeted by like a white person. But other minority

> groups are definitely responsible a bit too. Like, racism and like oppression towards like Hispanic people, Asian people, it's definitely not as normalized—it's less, it's less brought up than it is as like, as racism against Black people are. And then like, again, in minority groups, you see, you're gonna see like, different types of people calling, you know, calling everyone these offensive things because it's, they just don't see it as that big of a deal compared to if you were to say something to a Black person. I think, was that that is kind of what you were trying to say Serena?
>
> Serena: I guess, but like yeah, I feel like Cindy said it a lot better than I did, as she like, explained it a lot better. Because, yeah, that was basically what I was trying to say.

During this interaction, students depict a nuanced landscape of racial dynamics among students at Pinewood. Claudia opens by mentioning the experience of being called a derogatory term by a white student, Serena then adds the observation of racism between students of marginalized ethnicities, and Liam discusses the oversight of racism towards Asian and Latinx students when people focus on racism against Black people. Cindy also suggests that many students do not understand why certain words and phrases are "really harmful," and implies that this ignorance contributes to the persistence of racism among students. The interaction also reveals how students sometimes struggle to articulate observations about racism, whether due to discomfort or infrequency of speaking explicitly about racism.

Within individual interviews, some student participants brought up moments of racism they experienced within classrooms. They also discussed the more subtle and subvert forms of teacher prejudice. While overt incidents were memorable and often coupled with administrative action, it was the persistence of teachers' tacit racism that students talked about most.

Cindy explained how teachers' racist comments were rarely overt because "[teachers] know they can't say anything negative…especially if it's racially charged," but students could still tell which teachers gave off "the vibe" (Interview 3). She then went on to explain a bit more

this phenomenon.

> I feel like it's kind of just like, it's not directed at you, it's just kind of more of like offhand comments. And it doesn't happen very often, it's just when it does happen is very memorable and like you always hear from other people about “oh yeah that teacher is totally racist. Like don't do that. Don't go near them.” (Interview 3).

In this comment, Cindy mentions how students identified teachers that they perceived as racist and then communicated with their peers as a warning mechanism. Additionally, students detected this teacher racism through “offhand comments” and social cues.

Eli talked about teachers from which he detected a “hint of racism” and how this perception shaped his approach to interacting with certain teachers.

> Yeah, but they just, that's why I don't like messin’ with old people a lot of the time, it's cuz like, you can't really relate with them. But on top of that, like, you can already tell what their thoughts are, you can already tell what their views and whatnot are…And, as a minority and as a part of the younger generation, that doesn't fit with our views at all, it's actually almost the complete opposite, you know. We'd like to have a lot of different things compared to those groups. So, I mean, since that's what they believe in, you know, you just can't relate with them. That's why I don't really have that many conversations with them, either. You know, it's really tough, it's really awkward, it's like a forced conversation. You got to, you got to pretend that you care for that amount of time, you know, you just got to pretend that like, like, even if we've been together, or knowing each other for the past three years, it's like, this small distrust because of our beliefs, like, it's hard to be friends with somebody that you don't have the same beliefs. And, you know, very difficult you got to act a certain way to where you appeal to them, so that you don't look or feel weird whenever they talk to you. Because especially whenever the other person has more power...like he can do whatever he wants, whenever it comes to school, so you wouldn't want to be on his bad side, right? Which is why I gotta have some sort of that, like fake culture or fake personality. (Interview 3)

Because of the inherent power dynamic between teachers and students, Eli adopted a “fake personality” whenever he interacted with teachers he perceived as unfriendly. Eli refers specifically to his orchestra teacher, Mr. G, who he has known “for the past three years,” and identifies a “small distrust” that causes him to remain distanced and guarded in their interactions. Eli’s ability to “code-switch” in order to navigate educational spaces is an adaptive

trait that he has employed to be more successful, but also a burden that is unique to marginalized students. Additionally, the clarity and specificity with which Eli discusses the phenomenon reveals the extent to which he has had to navigate having teachers with a “hint of racism” and developed adaptive strategies.

Racialized experiences were part of the fabric of high school and students had developed strategies for navigating spaces in which they perceived threats. The potential for racial microaggressions was ever-present in a way that normalized occurrences of racism as part of the schooling experience.

"Bare minimum:" Responses to Racism

Students critiqued the ways in which teachers and administrators addressed instances of racism on their campus and attempted to engage discussions of racial inequality. Students took note of “pointless” informational material (Liam, Group Interview) and “performative” acts of social justice (Serena, Group Interview). However, students interpreted these actions as largely inauthentic and unproductive. Despite documented and well-known issues with racism among students and teachers at Pinewood, students felt that faculty responses were only intended to preserve the image of teachers and appease district stakeholders. In this section, I examine students’ depiction and interpretation of campus responses to both local racism and broader social movements.

Eli started out talking specifically about Mr. G, but expanded to describe how he sees many teachers only doing the “bare minimum” when it comes to confronting racial issues.

> I just had, like, these small hints that just led up to the fact that, like, he's a person that doesn't, that doesn't really care about the whole race thing…he doesn't really care about the whole Black Lives Matter. I highly doubt he would care. Like, don't get me

> wrong, he would do the like…[teachers] do the bare minimum. They do enough to where no one can say, "hey, you didn't do anything." But they didn't do enough to where people actually change or people actually do something about it. You know, they did the bare minimum? (Interview 3)

Several students discussed how teachers and peers engaged in acts of performative solidarity for racial justice movements but were not willing to engage in authentic dialogue. Through these limited actions, teachers tacitly communicate to students a disinterest in addressing racial inequity. Students interpreted "bare minimum" efforts as no better than just remaining silent or inactive.

Within the group interview, students discussed the level of infrequency with which teachers incorporated racial conversations into class. Claudia recalled "the only time I remember being talked about racial matters was in [a college-readiness class] when we had a lesson about racial literacy and things like that. And it was just that one lesson, and we're done" (Group Interview). Liam and Cindy discussed a sequence of self-led "extra credit racial literacy lessons" within their English class (Group Interviews). The lack of care or class time provided to these efforts communicated to students a subordinate value and Liam was frustrated that these efforts are "not focusing on things that could like get us somewhere" (Group Interview). Eli felt that if more students were in-person this year the school would have no choice but to better address the issues being discussed in the national dialogue:

> I would really doubt that if we had in-person school today, or for the rest of the year, that we would not be learning more about Black history, right? I would really doubt that a teacher would not at least talk about African American culture or Black culture in America. Like it, especially this year or last year, if COVID never happened, we would have been learning so much more about Black History Month or just everything when it comes to just African Americans in America. Like I can already tell, especially with Pinewood being so diverse, it would have happened like we would have probably changed a lot of the topics, and just made it more to where it's appealing towards just the African American person. (Interview 3)

The word “appealing” may not fully encompass Eli’s meaning. With this comment, Eli conveys a desire that teachers engage a curriculum that is more comprehensive and inclusive of African American history and culture. In his mind, the nature of virtual instruction during this year created a setting in which teachers could continue to avoid addressing topics of racial justice.

Several student participants also suggested that the school did not properly educate or discipline students who perpetrated acts of racism. Eli was skeptical regarding how much a teacher could alter a student’s problematic behavior: “if the student is just raised that way, it just starts at what happens at home” (Interview 3). However, Eli along with other participants noted how teachers failed to educate students on the reasons why certain statements and actions carry racialized meaning and cause harm. Serena and Cindy discussed how they felt the school should respond when students engage in “racially insensitive” behavior during the group interview.

> Kelsey: What do you all think is the responsibility of schools, and like addressing these issues or having these conversations [about racism]?
>
> Serena: I feel like just they should give, like, proper punishment to people that are doing these racially insensitive things. Like I'm not saying completely, like, kick them out of school and like, whatever, but just like, at least do something to where people understand why it's bad. Or like, why, again, [why] these things shouldn't be said. Which, in my opinion, I feel like that shouldn't even, like, be happening. Like, I feel like we shouldn’t—no one should really have to like dumb it down. Like, “hey, you can't really call people slurs,” or “Hey, you know, maybe you shouldn't, you know, say this certain comment about a certain racial group.” Like, I feel like this is like, again, very frustrating, like, at least like in like, from my perspective, because…I feel like I have to be the one that educates them. And that's very frustrating. And like, honestly, kind of exhausting, because it's like, this is stuff that I face. And it's like, you know, it sort of just kind of makes me feel like I'm having to—this is a bit extreme—but like relive the trauma. You know, like not that to that extent, but like, basically just kind of going like having to think about, you know, all the oppression and all the insensitive things done, not only to me, but just my race in general and my ethnicity in general. And it's like, I don't want to have to do that. And I feel like the schools really shouldn't have to do that. They shouldn't have to talk about like “this is right, this is wrong,” but it's sort of

necessary with the way that certain people are raised and just brought up in this way certain people talk and act. But I also feel like when schools choose not to take a position on it, and when it comes to things like racial insensitivity, and they choose to be silent on it, it's very telling, even though they're not saying anything, necessarily, it's very clear where they stand on those issues. And I feel like the same can be said about a lot of different things like in our society and in our world. And, yeah, it's like, I do want something to happen, but not to the point where their whole life is ruined over a comment that they didn't really think through, if that makes sense.
Cindy: I kind of agree with what you're saying. I feel like not just the school, but I think it's more of like the district. I think everything that they do is so surface level. Remember, whenever [the superintendent] came up with that video talking about how like, "students came to me, and they told me that they were being discriminated against. So I came up with the list of things that we were going to do." And there were so like, idiotic, like, "I'm going to be nice." I was like, "this is so stupid." I just, I think it's so surface level, they, they do enough to where they can't piss people off that are racist. So like, they'll be like, things that they say, are like, so superficial. It's like, "we don't like discrimination." Well, nobody likes discrimination. Like they do just enough—cuz we live in Texas—like they do just enough to where the old like, people who are set their ways, aren't like "you're brainwashing my children," but just enough to where it's acceptable. Like you said something, "congrats, you've stood up somewhat," but then you haven't done anything. Like there's no actual implication…nobody's ready to really have that discussion or that conversation because the amount of backlash that the school would get. And then at the end of the day, like, I think schools should definitely teach it, like what Serena is saying, like, you should definitely be educating your students about the problems, especially if you're preparing them for adulthood…but they do just enough to say that they're doing something, you know. Like, it's not enough. And then at the end of the day, the people that have to do the heavy lifting and have to talk, are the people that are affected. And it while it is important to give people of color voices and to speak out, the entire responsibility—like, it's not just a person of color problem, like, it's not. It's an everybody problem…I should not have to be educating you on why you shouldn't be using the N-word. Like, that's not, you know…why am I telling you when you should already know? So yeah, I just definitely think the school should be doing more, but that's school politics and whatnot.

Serena and Cindy feel that the lack of conversations surrounding racial issues leads to a situation in which people of color have to pick up the slack by educating people—both in school and within society at large. Within the context of school, Serena implies that ignorance leads students to say racially insensitive things (i.e., "a comment they didn't think through"). Both Serena and Cindy agree that people "should already know" why not to say certain things, but

“at the end of the day…schools should be educating students.”

"Besties with the principal:” Silencing

Student participants were unlikely to report observed racist incidents or problematic teachers. When asked why they were hesitant to report incidents, students expressed a concern they would face repercussions or that there was not a specific action serious enough to warrant reporting. Additionally, Serena, Cindy, and Eli all discussed a feeling of futility and the impression that nothing would change.

The lack of transparency regarding teacher disciplining led Cindy to develop the perception that administration did not care. After recalling a specific incident where a teacher said the N-word in class, she stated: “nothing really happens. So, or at least on our end, they don't tell us anything. Right?.” Cindy explains how this perception prevented students from “disturb[ing] the peace.”

> Cindy: I just feel like it's very much like a group thing. Like I think it's really good that administrators and stuff always have their teachers’ back. Like it's good that there's that sense of like collaboration and things like that, but I mean I don't really—no, no I wouldn't tell anybody. I would tell students like "oh my god can you believe what he just said?" But I mean what are we going to do like report him? Like I don't know, it’s very much a “he said, she said” thing…like you're already besties with the principal, what am I going to say? You know like it's not really—I don't want to say my place, but like definitely makes it clear that it's not your place to like comment on anything that they’re saying
>
> Kelsey: hmm, interesting. Well, I mean, you know, for me, my most recent experiences working in a school have been as a teacher. I worked at a small school, and like even then, you know we don't always get along with our principals either. You know, there's even…[Cindy cuts in]
>
> Cindy: There’s—yeah—there's definitely teachers that you can like go to talk about it, but it's not really like a "you need to do something about this," it's more of like "oh my gosh, that was so crazy,” you know. I just feel like it really does disturb the peace. It's

> just easier sometimes if you don't address it and you don't make a scene because then it just gonna become a thing like then they know. (Interview 3)

Based on previous experiences in school, Cindy did not see functioning mechanisms in place to handle teacher racism. In addition to having the impression that administration would not take action, Cindy also voiced a concern that a reporting student may face negative consequences.

> Cindy: So, it's just like, it's easier, especially because I have to go to class every single day. And if I call you out, you're gonna know it was me who said something. So, obviously, you're just going to make my life harder. There's not really a point.
>
> Kelsey: Why do you say she would know that it was you that called her out?
>
> Cindy: Because people talk. Like—people talk—if you're in a classroom for full 20 kids, then those 20 kids are going to go to their friends, and their friends, and then just everybody eventually knows.
>
> Kelsey: Mmmm.
>
> Cindy: So, it's not like there's any sense of discretion.

Eli further described the silencing mechanisms in place that made it difficult to address issues of racism at Pinewood, especially among teachers.

> I would say there is an elephant. But what can you do about it? You know, if they don't, if they're not directed by it, then what evidence can you use? Like, you can say whatever you want, but at the end of the day, you have to have some sort of evidence. And it has to be reported and whatnot. So... (Eli, Interview 3)

The intangible racism and "offhand comments" discussed in an earlier section (see *"It's not like nobody knows," p. 120*) made it difficult for students to identify specific actions or provide "evidence" to report problematic teachers to administration.

As Cindy mentioned, she identified "teachers you can go to" on campus with whom students felt comfortable discussing racial issues. Eli mentioned Ms. B as one of the few

teachers he would consider talking to about racial issues—as did several other student participants—but he hesitated to approach her with these concerns because he did not want to get her in trouble or put her in an uncomfortable position. While Ms. B's youth and identity as a person of color made her more approachable in the eyes of students (according to both Eli and Claudia), Eli also recognized that her shorter tenure at Pinewood meant that she had less power than other teachers.

Ms. B expressed an awareness of the racial tensions present at Pinewood and a concern that students felt they could not approach administration. In my conversation with Ms. B, she discussed the racial diversity at Pinewood and students' awareness of the current "political climate."

> Ms. B: But, you know, I've heard them kind of go into politics with each other or like, "oh, did you hear that this happened?" Blah, blah, blah. Or, you know, especially during election time. And so, there's that.
>
> Kelsey: Yeah, so they definitely seem informed?
>
> Ms. B: Yeah, yeah. They had a Black Lives Matter march, sometime during COVID. Time kind of runs together. I think it was the summer, I guess, where, you know, students planned it and, they, they walked around like, we have that little park, it's on the other side of the school.
>
> Kelsey: okay
>
> Ms. B: So, I think they like walked around all [around] the school, probably around the neighborhood around here. Which I would have joined. But I guess I really was not following like Pinewood stuff. Yeah, that I think it was in the summer because I really was trying to avoid work and thinking about anything Pinewood related. Like, "oh, oops," I think someone sent an email after it happened. Like "oh look how great this is;" why didn't they just send an email before saying, "hey, if you want to join, join," but anyway, so yeah, [the students] seem very informed.

The lack of clear communication surrounding the student-led BLM march in summer 2020 is indicative of a culture in which students do not expect teachers at Pinewood to be invested in

engaging in racial dialogue. While it is possible that Ms. B unintentionally overlooked information regarding the march, there may have been an intentional effort on part of administrators or other teachers to suppress knowledge or student organizers making an assumption that teachers were not interested in participating. A local news article on the Pinewood march incorporates quotes from another Pinewood teacher who shared the impression that he felt limited by bureaucracy and fears of retribution in his capacity to engage in authentic racial dialogue with students.

"I didn't realize there was a stereotype:" Whiteness in Orchestra

Students communicated a latent recognition of preexisting stereotypes associated with orchestra membership; often this realization was coupled with the cognition of a white norm in orchestra. Students made observations about trends in orchestra membership at three different levels—among students at Pinewood, students in other high school orchestras, and then broader societal understandings of the type of person in orchestra (including professional ensembles). In this section I will discuss who students saw as the “typical” orchestra member and how these perceptions developed.

Within our conversations, I asked students to talk about what they consider a “typical orchestra student” in the context of Pinewood as well as perceptions of any stereotypes surrounding orchestra involvement in general. When it came to Pinewood, several participants mentioned high academic achievement, but for the most part they felt that orchestra students represented a variety of personalities and interests. Liam responded to describing Pinewood’s typical orchestra student with: “I don’t know, a human being?” (Interview 3).

Most students reported that they had no awareness of existing racial stereotypes nor

did they make any observations about racial representation prior at the time they joined orchestra. Only over time did they become aware of existing stereotypes and notice trends within their own orchestra program. Serena discussed her latent development of awareness surrounding any racial trends or stereotypes in the orchestra.

> I think it was something that I realized after joining, because I think as you know, like a sixth grader, I wasn't really like, paying attention to like, the racial makeup of an orchestra. Right? You know, but I feel like, I don't even think after—I feel like it took like, a couple years after I joined to really realize that just because…I just didn't put like, extra thought into it. I just, I just sort of thought of as like, "yeah, I'm in Orchestra," like that's just it. And so, I think probably, literally like high school until I really like thought about it and like, paid attention to like, how it's sort of divided in a way and how I don't really fit the typical Orchestra student, you know, stereotype that people have. (Interview 3)

Serena later revealed that she developed awareness of this "typical orchestra student stereotype" when a family member made an "insensitive" joke after an orchestra concert. Serena was a bit embarrassed to reveal this incident and did not recall the joke (or chose not to repeat it) but made it clear that the comment referred to a stereotype regarding Asian students in orchestra. Claudia also discussed perceptions about assumptions made regarding Mexican and Mexican American violinists: "If you're Mexican, you may play the violin, or you're in a mariachi group because, well, Mexicans, well they play for Mariachi bands."

Students also recognized some broader cultural associations with orchestra and professional musicians. In contrast to the diversity of Pinewood orchestra students, Liam said "if I were to go look at professionals, it's like an old white guy sitting in a nice chair. Just, [in a] suit, like super stubborn." Claudia reflected a similar perspective regarding age and lack of approachability when it came to professional orchestra musicians.

> when you see a professional orchestra group, you don't really see younger people playing…the ones that I've seen, for example on videos, they're usually more the older ages…whenever orchestra players play, they have really strict faces, and they really

don't nudge or anything like that. They just have a flat face expression. So, I think really serious too. That's about it.

In addition to voicing impressions about orchestral musicians themselves, some students also hinted at an association of orchestras to status and high culture. Cindy, on a number of occasions, hinted at or directly mentioned a relationship between class and orchestra: “whenever you think of an Orchestra, it’s so like, elite, like high class, like money, you know, like expensive” (Interview 3). For Claudia, playing violin is a substantial part of her identity and also instrumental to shaping her success in life.

> Claudia: For me personally, I know there's no like no musicians in my family, so I take it to heart that I do play, and my family members do as well, that it's so interesting because I'm doing something with my life, like, cuz almost my family, it wasn't the same for them. So, I'm really just grateful to have the opportunity and being able to play the violin. For...I know that's who I am.
>
> Kelsey: Yeah.
>
> Claudia: Um, it's just always been a part of me so just special I guess
>
> Kelsey: So, do you kind of feel like playing the violin is kind of like symbolizes you being successful and, like you said, “doing something”?
>
> Claudia: Yeah, it can be. It is because, well, you're doing something which is, which is playing right? and it being so sophisticated that you're playing the violin, and you know how to play it…When I see a musician, I'm very amazed because I could say, “Oh, I play an instrument too,” so I could connect. (Interview 3)

Claudia associated being able to play an instrument as an asset and associated with sophistication. Playing the violin was that was “special” to her identity and also reflective of her “doing something” with her life and school.

Both Eli and Serena expressed more frustration at the recognition of racial trends associated with orchestra and the exclusion of Black people from what is considered “typical” in

an orchestral setting. Eli discussed how he did not allow awareness of racial associations to influence his decision to participate in an organization or activity.

> I just do whatever I do, you know. Even if I have a background that does not completely align, with what I do, like, for example, like, it's obvious that, you know, majority of African American population wouldn't go into fine arts, you know. They tend to go, I would say, in athletics and whatnot. And I was in athletics, freshman year and Orchestra freshman year, as well. (Interview 3)

Eli reiterates an assumption that Black students are less likely to join fine arts and states that this knowledge does not change his behavior. In fact, he mentions later that in some ways this knowledge pushes him to push himself more and “dig in” while playing. At the same time, the expectation that Black students don’t “go into fine arts” places a cognitive burden of otherness on Eli and other Black students. Serena further elaborated on what she saw as existing stereotypes for high school orchestra participation and a frustration over the persistence of such stereotypes.

> I feel like when you think of like a typical like orchestra student, I guess, most people wouldn't think of like a Black student or like an athletic student…And I feel like you can definitely—like "duh" you could be Black or you can, so you can be an athlete in orchestra. And so, I feel like that sort of needs to sort of shift and like we need to stop like having this stereotypical orchestra kid like usually being Asian or white, or like really like super-high in academics and all that stuff. (Interview 2)

Like Eli, Serena references a disproportionate representation of Black students in high school athletics programs and an underrepresentation in orchestra—especially the higher levels of orchestra. Serena also shares a perspective held by most participants that couples white and Asian students as privileged within the context of orchestra. Lastly, Serena suggests that the knowledge of these racial trends creates a sense of exclusion for students who do not fit into the expected typecasting of orchestra students.

"I want these players:" Individual Competition and Meritocracy

Placement of students into the selective ensembles and ranked chairs operated as a meritocracy from the perspective of students. Some students recognized the ways in which these structures recreated patterns of racial hierarchy based on prevailing orchestra stereotypes. In addition to ensemble hierarchy, external competitive structures functioned as a mechanism to both maintain and challenge the racial status quo within the orchestra program.

The top ensemble was still perceived to have a larger representation of white and Asian students in relationship to the rest of the school and the lower orchestras had a higher proportion of Black and Latinx students than the more selective ensembles.

> Serena: There's a lot more like Black and Hispanic people in like lower groups. But like, at the same time, like, when I look at it, you can see Black, Hispanic people like in all the groups. Yeah, but I feel like they're more towards like the bottom groups. (Interview 2)

Students also perceived the intra-ensemble hierarchy to have a racialized element. Eli made the observation “there [was] no diversity in the front row” (Interview 2) during his previous years of orchestra and Claudia shared “I would definitely say the people who are in front are usually white” (Interview 3). However, Liam has noticed the inverse effect occurring over his time in orchestra. While he acknowledged an imbalance of overall representation of Black and Latinx students, Black students have moved up to carry prominent positions within the ensemble this school year.

> I definitely feel like I talked to Cindy about that probably in like freshman year, just like, “Oh, wow look at this,” because there might be like one to two [Black students] per section. Right now, we have two sections without any like Black people. But I feel like—just because now there's a lot of representations sort of in the front row—I don't really make the realization that there's like, none behind. Because I think like, basically every Black person in the orchestra is somewhere in the top row. (Interview 3)

Liam, who perceived the orchestra to be racially diverse, still admitted the orchestra

directors likely did not think much about the racial make-up of the orchestra. From his perspective, the process of placing students into different ensemble levels what based on ability with diversity occurring as a natural consequence.

> Kelsey: I'm just like thinking, picking up some of the stuff that we were talking about in the in the group interview, just in terms of life teacher awareness and that kind of thing, like how much do you think this question of like, diversity or representation is on the mind of your teachers?
>
> Liam: I don't really think—I wouldn't expect any of the directors to just have make an orchestra in [mind], like, with, "oh, like, we should have this very diverse orchestra." I don't think, I don't think anyone really has that in mind, *per se.*
>
> Kelsey: Right
>
> Liam: I just think that like the most interaction they have with [diversity] is just looking back and being like this orchestra is not like—you're not going to see it—it's not very dominating [racially] one way or another. Well, I really wouldn't—hmmm—I wouldn't expect just a lot like diversity to be on their mind. But I wouldn't imagine that they're unaware of it. I feel like it would be very, like they'd be aware of what's going on. But it wouldn't be intentional. It would just be like, I want these players, like this is how they were playing. (Interview 3)

Students largely acknowledge that more than just playing ability goes into chair placement—such as rehearsal attendance, seniority, and leadership ability—but all students placed value into the hierarchy of the ensemble as a reflection of their ability in orchestra. Front row chairs were considered more prestigious, as was being a first violin over a second violin. Claudia also spoke about her perception of the meritocratic process driving chair placement and the status associated with being "first chair."

> Claudia: Ms. B would switch it up…one time I was in first chair, so I was really happy about that.
>
> Kelsey: So, did you feel like you were trying to get up there, that that pushed you forward?
>
> Claudia: Yes, I feel like having that mindset that you can do better, or you, you should

> have the mindset to do better, that definitely really puts you in this state, that you will do better and you're going to progress, somehow, some way. And you just really just, saying to yourself that you can do it. And that you're going to practice more, and things like that, or I'm gonna do this because I want to be more front in the chairs, so that definitely did something.
>
> Kelsey: Did it feel more like you were just trying to push yourself to get better and the chair was an outcome of that, or did it feel like you're almost trying to like compete with other people to like beat them out?
>
> Claudia: Um, to be honest, um, it could be both, honestly. But more of the first reason you said, where it was an outcome of your, your [success]. And um, I feel like it's always something which has to do with competitiveness, so that that's another reason to really be in the mindset as well, like, "Oh, you know, I'm in front. That means I'm a good player, obviously." (Interview 2)

Both teacher participants discussed how they attempted to disrupt and deemphasize the ranking of chairs by rotating seats often and making seating decisions based on a combination of factors. Despite being transparent with students about their seating decisions, Ms. B stated that the students “ingrained” the hierarchy of chair placement and Mrs. S admits: “I try downplay the whole chair thing…but it’s hard to undo that” (Interview 2).

For the most part, students were uncritical of the hierarchical structure of orchestra despite some noticing racialized outcomes. Jacob did not have any comments regarding a racialized hierarchy and Liam, Claudia, and Cindy did not draw any direct connections between meritocratic structures and racialized outcomes. Eli and Serena were the only participants to discuss a possible connection between competitive structures and race. Eli worked hard freshman to move from the second ensemble to the top group. Though he received a promotion to the top group his sophomore year, he felt his momentum stalled out as he remined in the middle of the second violin section all year. It was not until the external mechanism of All-Region junior year that he increased in the chair hierarchy.

> So, since I did All-Region with a girl…who was my stand partner at the time, we both moved. I moved from like sixth chair [first violin] to first. And that still got me mad right cuz freshman year I'm like the second chair, doing my best, everybody knows I was doing my best because everybody could almost tell right. Sophomore year, everybody also could almost tell that I was doing good, but then junior year he still doesn't place me up, like it just didn't match, you know? So that's one thing that I just had a little against orchestra at the time, but I just played as hard as I can to prove everybody wrong.

As reflected in a previous quote, Eli had a tendency to channel his frustration into productive energy to try to "prove everybody wrong." In the following conversation, he reveals more of his interpretations surrounding the All-Region incident and his lack of previous promotion.

> And I didn't want to believe it was race. And I don't, I still don't think it is, because he allowed me to become concert master after All-Region. But at the time, race was really like a strong factor [on my mind], why his decision making, or his decision was made. And it was a joke between my friends like I would just be like "yo he didn't let me, he didn't let me become a first violin because I'm Black" or something you know as a joke. It wasn't true but...

Even though Eli did not wholeheartedly admit that his race was the reason Mr. G did not promote him to the extent he felt he earned, he could not help but make the observation that there were no Black students within the first violin section his sophomore year. He discussed how other students took notice of his playing ability that seemed to surpass that of students seated in front of him. In the end, Eli closed that topic with "there has to be a reason you know, and [race] was a somewhat good reason."

Serena spoke about larger forces at play that may have an impact on student representation in orchestra, including access to lessons and early musical experiences.

> I didn't grow up, you know, young playing cello or, I didn't grow up being put into lessons, but I know people who have who don't look like me, you know, so I feel like that has an effect on, you know, who's like, in the certain groups and Orchestra? And I feel like I mean, I wouldn't know if they are aware, but I would assume they are, cuz it's

> very clear, at least for me, like, in my eyes, I think it's very clear. But I wouldn't know how they feel because again, it's just never really been brought up. It's not—I don't think it's something that like, is really that important to them. Just because, like, again, I think they just view it as, “Oh, we're all like an orchestra. It's okay,” you know. But again, it's just a matter of people. And this isn't an attack on them. I don't think it's their fault, necessarily, I just think like, when people see something sort of, I guess working in your favor, like if it's things like are working just fine, you don't see the need to like, address it or fix it. You know, like if it ain't broke, don't fix it sort of thing. (Interview 3)

In this comment, Serena draws a direct connection to students who have access to lessons and their likelihood of being promoted into “certain groups.” Furthermore, she speaks to the ways in which meritocracy results in an uneven representation of students of color. Similar to Liam’s comment earlier— “I want these players”—Serena sees the directors as focused on selecting students who perform at a certain level.

Theme 2 Summary

The persistence of everyday racism left many students resigned to accept these events as part of schooling and without obvious paths for recourse. This is not to say that students were emotionally unaffected by experiences with racism, but that racism itself constructs the status quo and students struggle to articulate the forms of subtle, everyday racism they encounter. Students also described ways in which teachers and administrators (mis)handled or remained silent on issues of racism and racial justice.

The orchestra classroom was also not exempt from the racialized landscape of Pinewood. The existence of racialized stereotypes in the cultural lexicon communicated to students an inherent whiteness within orchestra. Additionally, racial inequities manifested within the Pinewood program along the lines of inter- and intra-ensemble hierarchy.

Theme 3: Meaningful Aspects of Orchestra

From our initial conversations, it was clear that all participants shared a deep commitment to their participation in orchestra. However, many students discussed ways in which COVID-19 school interruptions caused them to reevaluate or recontextualize what aspects of orchestra they found most meaningful to their lives. Students discussed both musical and social aspects of orchestra that shaped their overall commitment and engagement. This final theme examines how students value orchestral experiences and their intentions to continue musical participation past high school.

"Orchestra attracts a vibe:" Appeal of Orchestra

Students discussed the ways in which they were initially drawn to orchestra and reasons for persisting. All students discussed a mixture of aesthetic and social elements that piqued and retained their interest in orchestra. Additionally, the extent to which students embodied a musician identity varied. In this section, I explore how students describe their reasons for joining orchestra and factors that have contributed to their persistence in the program.

Most of the student participants learned about the possibility of joining school music ensembles through the recruitment process in the district. As fifth graders, all Treeland students attend field trips to the junior high school to see the band and orchestra perform in advance of selecting sixth grade electives. Cindy and Liam were the only two participants who had parents who participated in school music, and they both characterized these as somewhat limited experiences: “my dad played the violin for a hot second there” (Cindy, Interview 1). Many were drawn to orchestra based on a preference for the quality and type of music they heard the orchestra perform, and for almost all participants this was coupled with a distaste for

the band. Claudia and Eli both discussed impactful experiences with music-making through their elementary music class. Claudia recognized her passion for music-making when she first joined fifth grade choir and made the "all-district elementary choir" (Interview 1). While in sixth grade, she remained in both choir in orchestra, but was forced to "cross out choir from [her] passions" because she was only able to have one fine arts elective in seventh grade. Orchestra was one of the first times she felt "really great at something" in school (Interview 1). Eli had a positive experience in fifth-grade general music when he and his friend were selected to play a key role in the percussion ensemble. Even though Eli first developed a curiosity for musical instruments from watching *Tom and Jerry*, he was not previously aware of the option to play an instrument in school music and did not think it was something he could discuss with his parents. As a result of the experience playing in the percussion ensemble and the recruitment performances, Eli became determined to play an instrument in sixth grade. Eli also recognized how students like himself, who did not have the "background information" from their parents about school music, may be less likely to sign up (Interview 1).

Serena similarly discussed being unaware of the option to participate in school music prior to learning about it in fifth grade largely due to her parents being unfamiliar with school music in the United States.

> Kelsey: I want to I want to take you back one second to when you were like first thinking that you were going to start orchestra and when you came home to tell your parents "hey, I want to play the cello," what was your parents' response?
>
> Serena: They didn't know what it was. Yeah, um, my mom was sort of like—again like she was very confused so I kind of had to explain to her like, "Oh, it's like a big…some big violin, sort of but not really." And then, I think it's just like a lot of like unfamiliarity towards it because I don't really think they had orchestras growing up. I think they saw it as more like, "oh, like okay whatever, it's just like some small thing, just like for a year." (Interview 1)

Many of the student participants discussed the ways in which orchestra and band were different and how this impacted their decision to join. Claudia and Jacob both discussed being deterred by the "strong sound" of the band, while Cindy "did not want to march in the Texas heat." Mrs. S also talked about how her perceptions of the difference in the type of student who is interested in orchestra over band.

> To join orchestra, you're already a nerd…You know you're not the rah, rah, cool, go to the football games on Friday night, play in the band…you've already said, "my social life is less important than my education," I think to be in Orchestra. (Interview 2)

Both Ms. B and Cindy talked more explicitly about how orchestra lends itself better to students who have other interests and obligations in contrast to the time commitment required for marching band. In speaking about orchestra student stereotypes, Cindy stated, "orchestra attracts a vibe" of students who tend to be "smart" and "driven," with many students on the honor roll (Interview 3). I asked about whether she felt there were any "die-hard" orchestra students; in her mind, this was a status largely reserved for band students at Pinewood:

> Like, okay we get it, you play you play the French horn, you're a drum major like "wow, I'm glad you found your passion this early in life. Good for you."…I feel like then it comes off like we're so like slouchy, we don't care about anything—we care! But it's just like we all joined Orchestra for a reason, like we are not going to be sitting out there marching in the heat doing all this in that, staying up late to go these football games. But that's probably why most of us are on the honor roll, so… (Interview 3)

In Cindy's mind, driven kids were drawn to orchestra because the lower level of time commitment facilitated their capacity to pursue a rigorous academic load. Ms. B also felt the difference in time commitment explained why many orchestra students were able to be involved in other organizations: "[orchestra students] have a little bit more time. Like, in the fall band is all about marching band, right. Like that takes up all of their time" (Interview 1). Ms. B discussed cooperating with other teachers on campus to accommodate students who were

juggling a lot of different activities; for the most part, she felt other faculty were happy to coordinate, which possibly supported stronger student retention in orchestra.

While most participants were strongly committed to orchestra, some held a much deeper connection to their identity as a musician while others were more invested in the experience of orchestra as a whole. Claudia stood out as one of the few students who places the connection to her violin as *above* the experience of orchestra itself. Even without the structure of formal instruction, she has no doubt that she would "always find a way to play the violin" (Interview 3). However, she acknowledges that she feels less excited and motivated by her entirely virtual orchestra experience this school year.

> Claudia: …whenever someone asked me something interesting about myself I always say, "I play the violin." And I used that as my identity, or I will forever use that as my identity, for as long as I'm playing right? […] I know there's no like no musicians in my family, so I take it to heart that I do play, and my family members do as well, that it's so interesting because I'm doing something with my life, like, cuz almost my family, it wasn't the same for them. So, I'm really just grateful to have the opportunity and being able to play the violin. I know that's who I am. (Interview 3).

Jacob and Eli both felt that their identity as a musician set them apart within their friend groups that were not involved in the fine arts. Jacob: "But [with] my friends outside of [orchestra], that was unique to me. So, I didn't want to quit doing it" (Interview 3). Both Serena and Cindy were more ambivalent towards their persistence in orchestra, possibly fueled by the challenges associated with COVID-19.

> Kelsey: what has kept you invested, like, throughout this year of Orchestra not really being like Orchestra?
>
> Serena: Honestly, for me, I'm just thinking like, this is my last year, let me just finish it strong. Like, you know, um, yeah, I feel bad for like sophomores and juniors, even freshmen who are just like, starting. And it's like this, you know, because I know, if it were me, I would honestly, like, think about quitting, just because, like, you know, I wouldn't feel like it was that worth it if I started off like this. But again, I'm just sort of,

> like, I literally have a couple more weeks after school, like, I can push through, like, it's fine. (Interview 3)

Serena felt that she was less invested in orchestra following the experience of school going fully remote in the Spring of 2020 but felt that she should “push through” because it was her senior year. Cindy similarly struggled with her commitment to orchestra this school year: "everything is like a give and take. Like, I liked it a lot in the past, it was giving a lot! And now I feel like it's taking a lot, but I'm already too far in” (Interview 3).

Liam at one point wanted to be a music major, but during quarantine realized that he did not have the internal drive to keep up with his cello playing without the formal structure of daily orchestra. “As expected, I really don't pick up my cello much outside of rehearsals, except when I get bored and want to play old, old music I've played in the past” (Interview 2). Whereas previously, the music making seemed like something that he couldn’t live without, being in “quarantine” brought to light the fact that he did not want music-making to become his job: “Is this like something I want to do like to stay alive, or like, I want to have in my life? Because I don't want to have too much of it was what I kind of realized” (Interview 2).

Instead, Liam decided he would prefer to be able to play music on his own terms and not in a formal fashion, dictated by school or demands of professional musicianship:

> Music [is] still a big part of my life, I'm still like a musical person. I still like, understand music really well. I love things like I love musical things. So, I do see myself, obviously getting engaged, just like playing my cello, in like, non-school related, work-related events is the biggest thing. just having like having fun. There being no rules with my instrument. That's the biggest thing. I don't want to play my instrument because I have to, I want to play because I want to.

He is particularly interested in being able to control his own music making and creativity, including making music with friends, “expressing myself when I want to, how I want to, with

ease.”

"Coming together as one" to Play a “jumble of notes”

The interruptions and adjustments that the COVID-19 pandemic forced onto the Pinewood orchestra program highlighted some of the aspects of orchestra that students valued most. Students talked at length about missing the experience of coming together to make music and also feeling challenged as a musician. In my third interview with students, we talked about how they define success for themselves in orchestra. All student participants framed their musical success in terms of being able to get “over the hill” of music that they originally perceived as challenging (Cindy, Interview 3).

In general, students largely communicated satisfaction and dissatisfaction with orchestra in terms of personal musical attainment. All students, regardless of ensemble level, wanted to be able to play music that challenged them. Liam recalled being frustrated by slow-moving rehearsals and “wanting to play [but] not being able to [and] wanting to do more [but] not being able to” (Group Interview). Cindy put into relief the difference in terms of personal “pay-off” this year:

> Like, we're here because we want to play a piece, like we want to. I guess it's just like, the success aspect is like, when you would go on to stage and it's just all those people in the crowd and then you're just playing, and it's easy to play. Because I'm a tense player. So, when it's kind of like, you know, we've played it enough times we practice this, like, we know the drill, and you're like playing it, and it just like, flows. Then I feel like I was successful. Like, I practiced enough. I did what I was supposed to do, like, it makes it feel worth it. Like all those early rehearsals, all those after school rehearsals then it's like, that was like, “yeah, that was worth it.” (Interview 3)

Serena, much like other students, enjoyed the collective experience of making music together.

> Kelsey: What moments or what aspects currently, if there are any—I hope there are—are you able to, like find joy in your orchestra and music making?

> Serena: I think when we like still, like, when we come together for rehearsals, it kind of reminds me like, “Oh, this is how it's like playing in a group.” And you know, like, I do enjoy that. So, I feel like that's something that, you know, reminds me like, you know, this is part of the reason why I've stuck with Orchestra for so long. And this is, you know, why I'm here just playing as a group and like, learning this piece of music together, even though we might not be like, in the same room all the time. You know, like learning the music together, and then coming together as one and then like, playing it together, and all the parts sort of like, complementing each other and like blending in and all that stuff, makes me really happy. And it's like, nice to hear because it's like, “wow, we did this,” like as a group, like, we worked hard. And we got to this point. And also, like, again, still like the people because I think, again, like we're all kind of feeling the same way. (Interview 3)

Most students reported feeling less motivated this year because they were working on easier music (related to COVID constraints). Students largely equated the level of difficulty of music with their interest and enjoyment in orchestra at a given time. This aspect was key to their motivation, investment, and sense of accomplishment in orchestra and discussed heavily within the group interview:

> Serena: It's very hard to be motivated when we're playing music that you're not really that into, because I feel like the difference between this year and the years in the past is that—again personally for me—I enjoyed a lot of the music we played last year, and like sophomore and freshman year, but now it's sort of like, almost like I'm like dragging myself to like show up to rehearsals and like commit and, you know, try hard and all this stuff.
>
> Kelsey: A lot of what I’m hearing is like, not only are you doing more work, but the payoff of the things you talked about earlier—about liking so much about Orchestra—aren't as readily accessible, like, you just don't have that as much.
>
> Liam: Yes, it's just a lot harder to put your whole 100% into it than it has been in the past years. And then as a result, it doesn't do anyone any good when you're not fully into it. And then everyone else starts getting demotivated and the director’s like “grrrr,” then it's like harder to be motivated after that. It's just a lot of having to push yourself to really be into it this year more than others.
>
> Kelsey: Yeah. And then, so Claudia, and Jacob, you guys have different directors, and I know, it's like Claudia, you're completely virtual. So how does all of that motivation and things interact for you?

> Claudia: Um, well, it is hard. But I say the struggle for me was knowing that we are combining with [the third orchestra] for UIL. And first of all, I was more like, I was worried that I was going to have to go to school. And then what would my parents say? And then more kids with another orchestra added to the already big orchestra? So, my parents had said, "No." But the motivation wasn't really there for me to really say, "Oh, I love this piece," or "Oh, I'm so motivated to play right now." […] Because [the orchestra teachers] try to get music that would fit for [the third orchestra] as well. So not too hard, or not too easy. But for me, it was more in the easy range as if I was in [the third orchestra]. And that really didn't fulfill my, well, my expectations, really. So yeah.
>
> Cindy: I think that's a really good point that you mentioned that because you're talking about how, like you have a higher skill set. And then you have to add in people that maybe aren't at the same like technical place than you are. And that's really similar to like, zooming, like Zoom Orchestra, like splitting your Orchestra into two different groups where people are online, and they're not getting their help. It's so hard to play online. It is like, *so hard* to play online. And not with like, lack of effort, like people are trying like, it's just hard. So kind of talking about how it's like really difficult. Like, whenever you're in person, and the pieces are easy, and you're doing like technically you have it down, but then having to like, do the catch up having to get people on the same level all the time. It's just like, so tiring, like it's, it's hard to constantly play the same piece over and over again, and then having to like wait for others to catch up. And it's not it's not anyone's fault though, is the thing. like there's nothing that you can really do because that's just where we are.

Within this interaction, students touched upon the drawbacks of having students engaged in orchestra through the different formats of school. Cindy and Serena both attended daily orchestra rehearsals, whereas Liam only came up for the extra UIL rehearsals. Claudia did not attend any in-person rehearsals. As a result of students receiving different amounts of instruction, Cindy observed that a lot of time in rehearsals was needed to "do the catch up."

As a result of the COVID-related challenges, students discussed tensions between what teachers expected based on previous years' performance and what was actually feasible this year.

> Kelsey: Both Claudia and Liam, you alluded to sometimes when the teachers would get maybe a little—like normally it's chill, but then sometimes things go off the rails a little bit. So, I want to know more about that. And anyone can jump in.

Liam: Cindy, do you want to say anything?

Cindy: Okay, um, I think it's just especially...um, obvious this year, I guess is the word? Because whenever you're at home, and you're not really doing much, and then the orchestra directors are [way up here], but you're [down here], it seems like I'm like, “Oh, wow. Okay, that's kind of a lot. We're gonna get over our heads. Let's not forget where we are, what we're doing, why we're here.” But I mean...in the end, I guess it all works out. And I can see why they're pushing. But, yeah, it's, it can be a problem sometimes. (Group Interview)

In addition to being motivated by more engaging and challenging music, students generally framed their sense of accomplishment in terms of perseverance and being able to tackle previously difficult music. Jacob talked about how important it was for him to develop consistency in his playing to feel successful.

Whenever I've been struggling with certain part of the piece, and I finally actually get it right, and I can do it over and over and it wasn't just a fluke, that's when I feel like I've actually achieved something pretty good.

Jacob also talked about the importance in developing “consistency” in his playing (Interview 3).

Serena: when I see a piece for the first time, and I'm like, “Oh, I can't play that.” And then after, like, a couple of weeks, I look at that same piece and I'm like, oh, like, that's, that's easy. Like, I can play through the whole thing. I feel like that is a big feeling of accomplishment, because it's like, wow, just a couple weeks ago, like, this looks like, you know, something like foreign. Like, I was like, I can't play this. And then boom, it's learned and now, it doesn't look like foreign, it looks like something that, I wouldn't say easy, but like something that I can play and something that I can play well. (Interview 3)

While students framed their personal sense of accomplishment through the terms of getting “over the hill” on a piece of music, the importance of the collective experience was also implied. Liam talked about the experience of receiving a daunting, new piece of music and “seeing like these three, four pages of what looks like a jumble of notes, looking at like each other, like, ‘what is this’? And like, a couple months later, you're playing it” (Group Interview). Liam is also particularly excited to see the orchestra return to making “bigger” and “better

music" next year when they have the chance to rehearse more consistently.

Ms. B talked about intentionally programming at least one piece a concert to really push students to show them the payoff of hard work.

> Kelsey: What do you feel like are kind of your goals for your students while they're in Orchestra?
>
> Ms. B: So it's all about—like, yeah, learning the music—but I think for me, like near the end, or even after a concert, right, then look how much you accomplished, right? Like, at the start, when you first get music, they were typically like "Ooh, yay, this seems fun to play." […] But I mean, like day one of getting a new piece, it doesn't sound good, right? […] They at least have one hard piece, right? Every concert, like there's one that just kind of pushes them there to the edge to show them, "like see, you can do this."

"Either you major in music…or you don't really do it anymore"

While all student participants voiced a desire to continue music-making beyond high school, they were unsure what options existed for them to continue to engage in formal music making after graduating. Among the students, they had different visions of how they would prefer to engage in music following high school, but they struggled to articulate how they could pursue these opportunities.

Cindy sees the options for music making beyond high school as a binary—either you become a professional musician, or you likely do not play music anymore.

> It feels very all or nothing. Whenever you graduate high school, like you either are like, I'm gonna major in music I want to do this, I want to be a music teacher or I want to go on to have a profession in music production and music this and I want to, you know, perfect my violin playing blah blah blah. Or it's like, nothing like you don't, you don't really do it anymore. (Interview 3)

Eli talks about the possibility of playing gigs, "like weddings," or "if I get a kid, maybe even teach him how to play" (Interview 3). But much like Cindy, he feels there is a sharp divide between being a high school musician and being able to continue in a more serious capacity.

> If you want to take it professionally it's way too competitive. Like you have to practice every day pretty much from what I remember. And the expansions, like the limits that you can go to are very narrow. It's either you go into like a very professional orchestra or [you do] something else, and I don't know what that something else is. That might be the only thing you know; they have to get into a professional, [orchestra]. And that's the most you get paid because isn't that the highest thing you can get paid from while playing an instrument? (Interview 3).

The fact that Eli is unsure about the expectations of professional musicianship reflects a lack of discussion on the topic of engaging in music-making beyond high school.

As a sophomore, Claudia was already thinking about how she would continue her violin playing after high school. In our conversation, Claudia stated that she wanted to pursue a career "in the healthcare field," but really struggled to see where she saw violin fitting into her life.

> I definitely think about it, like "where am I going to be with my violin?" rather than "what am I going to do for a living?" Just curious. It is a hobby that I love to do—play my violin—just putting it somewhere in my life, I feel like it's going to be very difficult. (Interview 2)

Teachers were aware that most students in the Pinewood orchestra were not interested in becoming professional musicians and not even likely to continue playing after high school. Cindy admitted the impression that her peers "are not going to college to study music." Ms. B talks more explicitly about how she sees orchestra experiences operating in students' lives after high school.

> Kelsey: How would you kind of distill what you hope like your kids take away once they've left Orchestra? Like, what about them having played in Orchestra for seven years of their schooling life—what do you hope that has left for them?
>
> Ms. B: Um, I hope that they realize [to not] quit things, right? Yeah, so they're quitting Orchestra when they graduate or whenever they leave our program. But hopefully it's not like [they are] quitting and forgetting about it, right? It's like a, "I did this and I [enjoyed] the time, but that part of my life has come to an end." So more like thinking about things, like sticking through things, or working towards something. Learning how

> to make friends. I think that's, that's hard to do…and even making like lifelong friends. I only talk to a handful of people I grew up with, and yeah, they were fine arts kids. You know, like, just even having fun memories from your high school days. […] And so, when the kids have a weekend, I always end it with like, "Okay, bye, be safe, make good choices." So, I hope that kind of sticks in their head, like, make good choices don't do something that will completely get in trouble. Um, hopefully that kind of sticks to some extent. (Interview 2)

As suggested by this comment, Ms. B begins with the assumption that students would not be continuing to engage in music-making past high school and immediately began discussing the extra-musical elements she wished students gained. Interestingly, Ms. B's personal story into music education reflects the same phenomenon of students struggling to navigate collegiate music structures. Ms. B first entered her undergraduate degree as an engineering major but found that she missed making music and wanted to begin playing again. During her second year of college, she met with the harp teacher to have a lesson and discuss options for getting in as a music major.

> Ms. B: That year that I decided to switch, I did mariachi, cuz I was like "well, here's a way for you to play harp." And so [the harp teacher] was kind of like, "well, I don't think I can admit you as a performance major, but you could do music ed." So, I was like, "Sure, I guess, whatever will get me back into music." So, I did that not really knowing if I even wanted to be a teacher, or whatever I wanted to do with music. For me, that was my like foot in the door. (Interview 1)

Not only does her experience reflect a problematic paradigm in which music education majors are assumed to need lower musical standards, but it also suggests a systemic issue of not preparing students for future music-making within this program, since Ms. B was also a graduate of Pinewood.

"I didn't know you could do that:" Gaps in Musical Skillset

Several students talked about possibilities for continuing to play that were beyond the

scope of skills they learned in the context of school orchestra. For some students, they expressed their desires to expand their musical skillset in vague terms, but others had more specific interests. Students were either unsure how to engage in the activity itself or just not clear how it would fit into their adult life. I asked students about types of music and musical experiences they wish they had access to in high school which revealed the narrow scope of understanding for the variety of forms available to them as string players. Within this section I examine the gap in student knowledge and skills in regard to the possibilities of string playing.

Students largely viewed school music through the lens of notational, classical music and any pursuits beyond this were outside the scope of "orchestra." As high school students, Liam and Claudia were the only participants who discussed learning music independently of the repertoire they played in class or private lessons. Claudia currently enjoys learning how to play "old school Mexican songs" on her violin via YouTube tutorials (Interview 1). When I asked her whether she ever learned music by ear, Claudia admitted: "to be honest I really didn't know you could do that I thought it was you had to look at the music and that's how you would know how to play and that's it" (Interview 1).

Even in asking students to describe additional skills they wish they learned or other musical opportunities, they tended to remain within the realm of Western Classical music. The following interaction with Cindy illustrates this phenomenon.

> Kelsey: Are there any other types of music-making or music skills that you're like, that would have been cool to have learned how to do?
>
> Cindy: Um, oh, that's a good question. Looking back, I don't know. Oh! I kind of wish they opened it up to where we could play like more than one instrument.
>
> Because I know, these two girls, they played two instruments, but that's only because they came from like another school that let them play two instruments. So, they played

> trumpet and violin and like, bassoon and viola. Like, it was like two different things. So that could be kind of cool. But yeah. I mean, that's kind of what I, looking back, that would have been kind of cool. I don't know. I don't know though. It would be different now. If I played two instruments or wanted to.
>
> Kelsey: Yeah. But there's never been a moment where you're like, “I really wish that I got to play mariachi music” or where “I really wish I'd learned how to improvise,” or something like that?
>
> Cindy: okay, I'm kind of—I hate music theory. I just...when my when my private lesson teacher, is like, “okay, let's count out this rhythm, a part of me dies.” I do not want to learn this. But I do know, like, like, we have a jazz band. That's pretty cool.
>
> Kelsey: There's like a whole genre of jazz violin. Like that's the thing.
>
> Cindy: Really?
>
> Kelsey: Yeah.
>
> Cindy: I had no clue. I did not know that. (Interview 3)

This interaction reveals how Cindy viewed the only possible avenues of musicianship within the predominant Western Classical paradigm, by discussing either music theory or a band instrument as the avenues for expanded musicianship. As an afterthought, she mentions jazz, but not in the light of something that she though was possible for her to pursue on violin.

Serena similarly struggled to recognize possibilities beyond the scope of the type of music-making she engaged in in the context of orchestra.

> Kelsey: what skills or things do you maybe wish you had learned or talked about in Orchestra to be able to play and make music either by yourself or just like in a not high school orchestra setting?
>
> Serena: hmmm, I don't know. Nothing really comes to mind.
>
> Kelsey: Last time you were talking about wanting to be able to, thinking it'd be really cool to, pick your cello up and teach yourself how to play like your current favorite song.
>
> Serena: Oh, well, yeah.

> Kelsey: Do you know how to do that?
>
> Serena: No. [laughing] I wish like—and this could be just like, like, perfect pitch thing, because I don't have perfect pitch—but like, just being able to listen to something, and then already know, like, what notes are being played and like, you know, being able to just transcribe it myself and be like, "okay, I can play this." But I think that's more of like a music theory thing than it is, like, an orchestra thing. But I mean, yeah, that that would have been cool. But its fine. (Interview 3)

Much like Serena, Jacob expressed a desire to be able to learn to play familiar songs on his viola once he graduated from high school:

> Definitely still gonna bring [my viola] around with me. I want to find just, songs that I know that I can just play on my viola, but it's kind of hard. I tried to look up some songs, but it's really just the violin parts. I can't really find the viola part. (Interview 3)

Because viola orchestral parts are written in alto clef, Jacob only had experience reading and playing alto clef. I asked whether he had ever tried learning treble clef, and he admitted that he "never thought about learning [other] clefs." Despite taking the initiative to look up music on his own to play outside of class, Jacob did not have the tools to actualize this desire. A simple addition of learning to play in alternative clefs could have left Jacob with more opportunities to engage with music.

Theme 3 Summary

Students were drawn to join the Pinewood orchestra due to a combination of both musical interest and social factors, though many first learned about the option to play an instrument in school through the in-district recruitment process. Among their high school orchestra experiences, students found the collective nature of music-making to be meaningful—a realization thrust into the spotlight as a result of COVID-19 restrictions beginning in the Spring of 2020. Students also gauged investment and motivation in orchestra

through the difficulty of their repertoire and the ability to face and overcome technically challenging music.

An unexpected finding in this study was students' simultaneous commitment to continue playing their instrument past high school, yet difficulty in articulating what form their continued musicianship would take. Students discussed interested in collegiate ensembles, social music-making, and individual playing but were unsure how they would seek out and materialize these opportunities in their life after high school. Additionally, students largely only considered musical options that were within the scope of Western, notational music and were largely unaware of string playing in other contexts.

In the preceding sections, I introduced the emergent thematic findings from this study: Belonging, Racial Status Quo, and Meaningful Aspects of Orchestra. In the first theme, I shared spatial and interpersonal factors that shaped students' perceptions of belonging within orchestra. The second theme explored structures and actions at Pinewood and within the orchestra program that upheld the racial status quo. The final theme comprised musical and social elements of orchestra that students valued. In the follow chapter, I place these findings in conversation with dimensions of critical race theory and situate in the broader corpus of research as well as discuss implications and avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The three emergent themes of Belonging, Racial Status Quo, and Meaningful Aspects of Orchestra intersect along dimensions of critical race theory to illuminate the mechanisms through which students experience race and racism in orchestra. Using tenets of critical race theory, I identified three facets of convergence among the thematic findings: Everyday Racism, Property of Whiteness, and Meritocracy. I organize this discussion along these points of intersection to situate and contextualize participants' experiences in the racialized landscape of public schooling in the United States.

Within this chapter, I first provide possible limitations of the present study. Then I discuss the dimensions of Everyday Racism, Property of Whiteness, and Meritocracy as they pertain to findings of this research. Next, I suggest implications for the field of music education illuminated by this study. I close the chapter by exploring avenues for future research.

Limitations

Initially, I was concerned that limitations in physical access to the research site and participants would be the primary limitation for this study. While the opportunity for field observations may have added an additional layer of context to the research, videoconference interviews provided greater flexibility for both the researcher and participants; additionally, the ability for students to be within their home environment may have made them more comfortable and expedited rapport-building. Even though students seemed open and forthcoming in their interview responses, due to the sensitive nature of race and my identity as a white researcher, it is likely that students were framing their responses in a way that would

not alienate me.

Following district IRB protocol, the orchestra teacher facilitated recruitment by providing recruitment material to a subset of students meeting discussed criteria. As a result, the teachers may have selected students they feel will best reflect their program. Additionally, student participants may not have been as forthcoming in their responses knowing that their teacher may be able to identify them despite attempts at confidentiality. Lastly, while generalizability is not an aim of this study, the findings do not extend beyond the context in which the research occurred—though they may lend themselves to transferability to similar settings.

Initially, I intended to collect written reflections from student participants throughout the course of data collection as an additional source of data. However, students were overwhelmed with the level of digital engagement required of them for virtual schooling and it did not seem practically or ethically reasonable to request written prompts in addition to the time they were providing for interviews. Thus, the singularity of data collection through participant interviews limited opportunities for triangulation.

Facets of Convergence

Everyday Racism

Bonilla-Silva (2013) introduced a framework for understanding the "covert and institutionalized system [of racism] in the post-civil rights era," referred to as color-blind racism (p. 15). Also described as "racism without racists" (p. 1), actions of racial oppression are no longer conceived only of overt racial prejudice, but also invisible mechanisms that reinforce the racial status quo. Extending on Bonilla-Silva's work and other critical explanations of systemic

racism, Kohli et al. (2017) proposed a framework for examining "new racism" in the context of education. Based on a macroanalysis of published research on racism in K-12 schooling from 2005-2016, their framework identified three forms of "racism [that] disrupts the educational opportunities of students of Color in K–12 schools:" "antiracist" racism, evaded racism, and everyday racism (p. 186). Student participants discussed racialized incidents at Pinewood that fit into all three categories identified by Kohli et al. (2017).

"Antiracist" racism refers to forms of institutionalized racism within schools, chiefly neoliberal structures and colorblind practices. Such systems result in a "silence around race maintains and legitimates racism, thus constructing hostile racial climates for students of Color" (Kohli et al., 2017, p. 189). In the third dimension of this chapter, I provide an in-depth exploration of how meritocracy—as an agent of neoliberalism—created racialized outcomes in the Pinewood orchestra program.

Students experienced instances of evaded racism in the form of "performative" solidarity and district initiatives to address racism in Treeland. Evaded racism refers to instances in which "equity-explicit discourse is divorced from institutional analyses or concrete discourse on race and racism" (Kohli et al., 2017, p. 186). At Pinewood, students identified the ways in which peers, teachers and administrators projected messages disparaging racism, but failed to follow-up with any concrete action or deeper engagement in the issue.

> Serena: …people just don't want to be labeled racist. And so they just sort of do a lot of things that come off as like performative to kind of keep this like image like, "Hey, guys look like I'm not a racist person. I make posts on my Instagram about how racism is bad, and how we need to bring attention and awareness to this," but a there's a lot less people from that group…that are really ready for that discussion and really ready to dive deep and talk about these things. (Group Interview)

Student participants identified this lack of willingness to engage in racial dialogue among both

students and faculty members at Pinewood. Educational approaches to promote diversity and equity that are not coupled with authentic conversations about privilege, oppression, and inequity fail to address patterns of racism (Doucet & Adair, 2013). Serena articulated how the silence and inaction on part of teachers and administrators communicated a lack of interest in addressing racial issues at Pinewood: "even though they're not saying anything…it's very clear where they stand" (Interview 3)

Cindy and Serena expressed frustration teachers' failure to educate students on the socio-historical factors underlying certain racists comments and behaviors.

> Cindy: And then at the end of the day, like, I think schools should definitely teach it, like what Serena is saying, like, you should definitely be educating your students about the problems, especially if you're preparing them for adulthood…but they do just enough to say that they're doing something, you know. (Group Interview)

From a young age, children begin to make observations about race and engage in conversations with peers; without structure and guidance supported by educators, children will engrain and reproduce the existing status quo of white supremacy (Boutte et al., 2011; Doucet & Adair, 2013). A sentiment reflected by Eli when considering the difficulty for a teacher to change students' behavior: "if you just put them in a class and that [teacher] says, 'hey, stop being racist'…they're just gonna go right back" (Interview 3).

Both Claudia and Serena talked directly about taking on the responsibility of educating others—mostly peers—when it came to making racially insensitive comments. Serena explained the emotional impact of needing to educate her peers on racism.[18]

[18] Simultaneous to writing this dissertation, the Texas legislature was one of many states debating a ban on critical race theory in K-12 classrooms. The bill explicitly barred teachers from engaging in the classroom conversations about the lingering impacts of historical racial discrimination and present-day structures of racial inequality (McGee, 2021).

> [It's] kind of exhausting, because it's like, this is stuff that I face. And it's like, you know, it sort of just kind of makes me feel like I'm having to—this is a bit extreme—but like relive the trauma. You know, like not that to that extent, but like, basically just kind of going like having to think about, you know, all the oppression and all the insensitive things done, not only to me, but just my race in general and my ethnicity in general. And it's like, I don't want to have to do that. (Group Interview)

Of the three components of "new racism," students alluded to an overwhelming presence of everyday racism. Everyday racism refers to the ways in which "overt racial slurs…have overwhelmingly turned to racial microaggressions, subtle yet powerful in their impact" (Kohli et al., 2017, p. 195). Racial inequality and incidents of racism were commonplace within the context of Pinewood to the extent that students accepted they were "just gonna happen" (Jacob, Interview 3).

Most of the incidents that students readily labelled as "racist" were those that reflected overt racial prejudice and discrimination. While students referenced a frequency of overt peer-to-peer racism, they admitted that teachers were much less likely to invoke racist language. Students employed terms such as "offhand comments" (Cindy) and "hints of racism" (Eli) to depict the ways in which teacher racism manifested at Pinewood. The pervasiveness of this less-tangible racism in schools is well-documented (Carter Andrews, 2012; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Harwood et al., 2018; Kohli et al., 2017). For example, DeCuir and Dixson (2004) found "racism is so commonplace within the school walls that when it appears, few are surprised" (p. 26); Cindy expressed a parallel sentiment: "I mean, it's messed up. But it's just like, it's unshocking. I'm unfazed" (Interview 3).

Even though students depicted a landscape of endemic racism, they conveyed a sense of futility in reporting incidents of teacher racism. I mentioned to Ms. B that students openly discussed racialized experiences in their classes at Pinewood, and she reacted with great

concern, expressing a hope that students felt able to go to administration. However, students were hesitant to report their experiences of teacher racism in any formal manner. Students articulated three different considerations that prevented them from reporting: lack of concrete evidence, concern that they would face recourse from teacher, or the belief that administration would take no action.

Eli talked about a "little sense of racism" from his orchestra teacher and reveals his thought process in remaining silent. In the following segment, he talks through a hypothetical scenario in which he would raise concerns to Ms. B.

> So there's not really that much to talk about. The only things I can really say is, "Hey, I don't feel comfortable with Mr. G saying these things." But what is [Ms. B] going to do? You know, she doesn't have that much power, because if she tells Mr. G, "hey, Eli doesn't like you talking about these things." The first thing he's probably going to say is, "what did I say?" Yeah, [he'd be] right, I have no evidence to show him because he doesn't blatantly say it. But every person in that class that is Black or any other race that is not white, or Asian, can just have a little sense of racism behind almost everything that he says like, it's just, once again, it's that gut feeling that you know, that you have, and I've been having it for a while, I just really don't care. I just play the music that I get, you know.

Because students were witnessing forms of subtle and covert forms of racism, they struggled to articulate concrete actions that contributed to the "sense of racism" described. As a result, students developed an impression that the racism they experienced would not warrant administrative attention.

Microaggressions and racialized microevents have become normalized in schooling to the extent that students viewed the discussed forms of "new racism" as a normal part of school interactions (Kohli et al., 2017). Despite "surface level" discussions regarding racial injustice, "language and labels often become tools for the systematic and systemic perpetuation of racism" (Khalifa et al., 2013, p. 505). Students identified the ways in which educational leaders

and peers used rhetoric of social justice and reform to promote an image of progress and solidarity. However, students failed to recognize any material changes or meaningful reform.

Property of Whiteness

I apply the critical race theory principle of whiteness as property (Hariss, 1993) to examine the normalization of whiteness. This perception was reinforced through racial stereotypes surrounding who as well as visible differences in racial representation among the ensembles. Students communicated an understanding that orchestra is an activity associated with whiteness. Additionally, students considered Asian peers as privileged within the context of orchestra, rendering invisible forms of marginalization Asian students may face in orchestra. Simultaneously, teachers also engaged in counter-hegemonic practices that reaffirmed students' racial identity and sense of belonging.

Historically in the United States, white privilege was ratified into law first through slavery and land ownership protections and then Jim Crow laws. Despite Supreme Court rulings on segregation and the passing of the Civil Rights Act, modern laws still establish the expectation that whiteness and white privilege is the "legitimate and natural baseline" (Hariss, 1993, p. 1714). Cultural values, norms, and property interests "serve as vehicles to limit and bind the educational opportunities of students of color" (Tate, 1997, p. 234). I use the principle of "whiteness as property" (Hariss, 1993) to discuss the power of white norms in shaping the Pinewood orchestra programs.

Structural elements of the orchestra program are developed on assumptions based on white, middle-class lifestyle. Tensions arose between teacher expectations and priorities and students' perception of reasonable expectations. Participation in the most selective orchestra

involved regular attendance to rehearsals beginning before the school day, additional after school rehearsals, and a strong expectation to take lessons and participate in the external competitive structures of All-Region and Solo & Ensemble. In order to fully participate within this structure, students need access to personal transportation, flexible home schedules for evening rehearsals and practice, and financial ability to pay for lessons. Additionally, Pinewood orchestra directors request a $100 "orchestra fee" from all students to cover costs related to social activities and trips throughout the year—a nominal fee in comparison to the standard among marching bands (Mulchahy, 2107), yet a substantial sum for many families. Ms. B explained that teachers did not enforce the fee or exclude students who did not pay in full, but the existence of such a fee sets a standard level of financial obligation to participate in school orchestra. While financial obligations did not pose a barrier for all students in this study, racially marginalized students are more likely to live in a low-income household (Hussar et al., 2020) meaning that fees and expenses associated with school music disproportionately impact students of color. The expectation to have additional time and money to fully participate in school orchestra is normalized in the experience of the middle-class, two-parent household associated with white suburbia.

White hegemony was reaffirmed through students' observations of obvious racial disparities within the orchestra program. Nearly all participants, including teachers, acknowledged that the less-selective ensembles were predominantly students of color and the "top" group had a higher proportion of white students. I argue in the following section that meritocratic and color-blind policy function to produce this disproportionality, but students view the lack of intervention on part of the teachers as maintenance of the status quo.

> Serena: I don't think it's their fault, necessarily, I just think like, when people see something sort of, I guess working in your favor, like if it's things like are working just fine, you don't see the need to like, address it or fix it. (Interview 3)

Serena's comment not only rationalizes the inequitable practice, but also suggests an implicit understanding of the concept of *interest convergence*. Derrick Bell's conceptualization of *interest convergence* contends that "decisions involving race are only made when the interests of the white majority are benefited or, to some extent, when a decision does not adversely impact them" (Khalifa et al., 2013, p. 493). Because the Pinewood orchestra continues to be successful, teachers would have little incentive or sense of urgency in addressing racial disparities.

Stereotypes served as a powerful construct through which student participants developed an understanding of white hegemony in orchestra. Students communicated beliefs regarding the "typical" orchestra student through the lens of racial stereotypes. Interestingly, many students discussed a latent awareness of these stereotypes, and were unaware of a racialized typology when they first joined orchestra. Serena's comment reflects the prevailing perceptions of a "stereotypical orchestra kid:"

> I feel like when you think of like a typical like orchestra student, I guess, most people wouldn't think of like a Black student or like an athletic student…And I feel like you can definitely—like "duh you could be Black, or you can be an athlete in orchestra." And so, I feel like that sort of needs to sort of shift and like we need to stop like having this stereotypical orchestra kid like usually being Asian or white, or like really like super-high in academics and all that stuff.

Not only does Serena identify the group image of orchestra students as Asian or white, and high-achieving, but she also explicitly places Black and athletic students outside this typology. Within this depiction, color-blind stereotypes of high-achieving and athletic are tacitly associated with certain racial groups. "Students' beliefs about general competencies in

extracurricular activities…contribute to the maintenance of group boundaries by race and add credibility to notions of group differences in academic ability" (Kao, 2000, pp. 419-420). The association of racialized stereotypes with the activity of orchestra coalesce to project an image of exclusion, ultimately reinforcing existing perceptions.

Student participants considered Asian students as a privileged racial group within orchestra and equated Asian identity to whiteness. While Asian students are cumulatively overrepresented within high school orchestra programs in the U.S. (Elpus & Abril, 2019), the "stereotype" of Asian students within orchestra stems from a complex history of imperialism and assimilation (Yoshihara, 2008). Even though Pinewood does have a sizable Asian population (14.8% of the student body), Mrs. S discusses how many of the Asian students attending Pinewood are members of ethnic minority groups, refugees, and first-generation working-class families—a shift in recent years.

> Mrs. S: I would say 80% of that top orchestra took private lessons. Many of them had good instruments. And it was, the racial makeup was different. It was a lot of Asian students. Many of them were Chinese, and white students, and some Hispanic students…and then a few Black students here and there. Um, then as time passed, we still have a big, a lot of Asian students, they make up a lot of our population, but their parents aren't from China or Hong Kong or even South Korea anymore. They're from Vietnam, and Cambodia…many more working class. (Interview 1)

The monolithic narrative of the Asian American "model minority myth" obscures the variation of experiences among sub-groups of the Asian-American community (Hseih & Kim, 2020; Pang, 2006). Eli suggested that Asian students are not impacted by the subtle racism that he senses from Mr. G: "But every person in that class that is Black or any other race that is not white, or Asian, can just have a little sense of racism behind almost everything that he says." While student participants viewed Asian orchestra students as members of the dominant group, Asian

adolescents also experience feelings of exclusion among their white peers (Bablak et al., 2016; Kao, 2000). The conflation of Asian identity into whiteness further marginalizes the Asian student experience within school orchestra and renders it invisible.

Racial stereotyping can be used to "justify certain attitudes and behaviors toward students of color" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 4). Based on ingrained perceptions of the "typical" orchestra student, it is possible that orchestra teachers—especially white orchestra teachers—are less likely to envision their Black and Latinx students pursuing music professionally. As a result, they may not spend time in class discussing future trajectories to engage in music professionally or semi-professionally. Music education researchers have found that high school music teachers heavily influence students who choose to major in music (Gillespie & Hamann, 1999; Rickels et al., 2010; Thornton & Bergee, 2008). However, teachers would not extend supports and information for navigating musical structures beyond high school if they do not envision Black and Latinx students as future musicians. Furthermore, if Black and Latinx students do not see themselves represented within the typology of orchestra and do not receive information about possible futures in music, how would they develop an image of themselves as future musicians?

Researchers have found evidence that racially diverse school music ensembles have lower levels of peer connectedness (Rawlings & Stoddard, 2017) and group affiliation (Lind, 1999; Lind & Butler, 2003). It is possible that students of color maintain a level of protective distance within the context of orchestra due to the white hegemony identified in this study as well as by others (Brewer, 2010; Escalante, 2020). Claudia and Jacob in particular discussed having a collegial, but not particularly close, relationship with peers in orchestra. Eli also

discussed employing a “fake personality” when engaging with Mr. G out of a sense of distrust. As I documented in the findings, students in the more selective ensemble conveyed a stronger sense of community within their ensemble; however, this may be due to the additional time spent together in extended rehearsals.

Teachers also engaged in counter-hegemonic practices that reaffirmed students’ racial and cultural identity in orchestra. Ms. B developed a practice of “orchestra student of the day” where she shared a student-generated Google Slide of every student throughout the course of the school year. She also requested that students shared with the class on days of celebration within their culture/religion. Both Claudia and Jacob discussed these practices as contributing to an overall sense of connections and belonging within orchestra.

Additionally, students described teachers as simultaneously supportive and accommodating, while also maintaining high musical standards and expectations for personal musical development. Students appreciated not only having teachers who they felt cared about their progress as a musician, but also provided them feedback and opportunity to improve through personalized support. These practices align with culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010). When teachers hold students to high standards, but also have flexibility and compassion, they are communicating a belief that students can be successful.

The maintenance of white hegemony in the Pinewood orchestra can be understood through the concept of property of whiteness (Hariss, 1993). Additionally, the perpetuation of racial stereotypes reaffirms racial hierarchies and further marginalizes student who perceive to be outside these expectations (Bablak et al., 2016; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Racial stereotypes associating Asian identity with string playing gave students the impression that their Asian

peers are complicit in whiteness, yet Asian adolescents also experience feelings of exclusion among their white peers (Bablak et al., 2016; Kao, 2000).

Meritocracy and Competition

The Pinewood orchestra program is organized in a skill-based hierarchy designed to achieve competitive success at both an ensemble and individual level. Nearly all student participants identified a racial trend corresponding with the orchestra hierarchy, discussing observations both among and within ensembles. In this section, I discuss the ways in which students both uphold and challenge meritocratic paradigms and explore how seemingly race-neutral mechanisms lead to inequities within the Pinewood orchestra. Additionally, I examine how the emphasis on performance outcomes leads to a narrow musical experience for Pinewood orchestra students.

Master narratives in education contend that individual effort is the sole determinant of students' success (Au, 2016). Educators and education policy makers are drawn to neoliberalism due to the reaffirmation of meritocracy, yet these systems render racialized structural barriers as invisible (Khalifa et al., 2013, pp. 498–499). Teachers of the Pinewood orchestra program place students into ability-based ensembles following an individual audition at the end of every school year—a common practice in large ensemble programs in music education. Additionally, students earn chairs within the ensemble that are based, in part, on playing ability and individual effort. Such structures are reflective of a meritocratic paradigm.

Students discussed racialized outcomes they observed within the hierarchical structures of their orchestra program. Eli and Claudia mentioned a perception that white students were more likely to be seated within the front of the orchestra and Serena shared "there's a lot more

Black and Hispanic people in lower groups" (Interview 2). Ms. B discussed how white students were the racial minority in the Pinewood campus and orchestra program overall, and stated she could "count, maybe on one hand, how many kids that are white" within her two orchestras—the least selective ensembles at Pinewood.

Even when racialized outcomes are present, students of color often "buy in" to meritocratic narratives due to their pervasiveness in schooling (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Claudia shared perspectives that reflected the belief that musical assessment based on individual effort is objective and race-neutral.

> …when trying to do something, or being a part of an organization, I think if it's just, if I'm good enough to do it, then I will be accepted in it and my, my color my ethnicity should have nothing to do with it. And same for other people like it shouldn't be based on race or anything like that. (Claudia, Interview 3)

As discussed previously, Eli speculated whether his race was an influencing factor in seating placement (see "*I want these players:" Individual Competition and Meritocracy,* pp. 137–138). Eli felt that his teacher overlooked both his effort an ability, especially during his sophomore year, and hit a point where he felt "there was no reason to push [himself], other than to just play the music." When Eli felt that his efforts went unacknowledged within the meritocratic structure of orchestra seating, he responded by disengaging. However, due to Eli's enjoyment of playing the violin and performing orchestral music, he persisted in orchestra; it is likely not all students would remain as resilient when confronted with perceived inequity.

Serena and Eli speculated on structural factors that contributed to differences in racial representation within and among ensembles. Both discussed how their parents, who grew up outside of the Unites States, had little knowledge about school music opportunities. Eli spoke directly how this disconnect may cause students to miss out on orchestra.

> Eli: …to be honest, orchestra as a whole is not appealing to high schoolers that are just your average high school [student]. You know, you wouldn't see an average high schooler pick up an instrument, out of nowhere and play it, unless they already have some sort of context to it, you know? (Interview 2)

Eli felt that he did not see a lot of Black students represented in fine arts overall, and suggested that students should learn more about the benefits of fine arts at the elementary level. Researchers in music education have found that parents play a large role in students' decision to enroll and persist in school music ensembles (Adderly et al., 2003; McPherson, 2008). As Eli suggests, and experienced himself, not all students may have parents with knowledge of or experience in school music programs. Without home exposure or opportunity to learn about instrumental music in school (Abeles, 2004), students would be less likely to seek out fine arts experiences.

Additionally, financial commitments associated with instrumental study could serve as a barrier to continued orchestral involvement and success within meritocratic structures. Jacob acknowledged that joining orchestra was "one of the more expensive things [he'd] done at the time" and his parents wanted to "see if it was something he was willing to stick with it… because they didn't want to throw money at something [he] wasn't going to do that much" (Interview 1). Serena mentioned students who have access to early lessons and other forms of parent support are more likely to attain higher levels of musical achievement:

> a lot of kids in higher groups have had access to the resources in order to better improve, whether it's lessons or whether it's starting at really young age…I didn't grow up being put into lessons, but I know people who have who don't look like me, you know, so I feel like that has an effect on, you know, who's like, in the certain groups and Orchestra

These findings relate to previous music education research that has found students with access to higher quality instruments are more likely to persist in school music (Moyer, 2010). Eli also

made an explicit connection between lesson involvement and participating in external structures such as All-Region and Solo & Ensemble: “I didn't want to go competitive cuz you needed a private lesson teacher” (Interview 1). Even though several students communicated a lack of interest in external competitive structures, it is possible they may have self-selected out of participating because they did not feel they had the adequate resources to be successful in these structures.

Serena, Eli, and Claudia all began taking private lessons for the first time in the school year prior to this project at the encouragement of their orchestra teachers and subsidized by a booster club scholarship program. Liam and Cindy began taking lessons during junior high and persisted in a virtual format, whereas Jacob never took lessons. Eli was already a junior by the time he started taking lessons and was already a capable player—he found the brevity of the 22-minute, in-class lessons frustrating: “you would do a scale, and sometimes do like sight reading and that's it” Ultimately, he ceased taking lessons when school closed in the Spring of 2020, but had already come to the conclusion that “[lessons] just didn't fit me cuz you need more time, way more time” (Interview 1).

Researchers in music education have documented the ways in which some students became disengaged by selective and comparative structures within the ensemble setting (Gerrard, 2018; Parker, 2015). All students in this study—with the exception of Cindy—admitted enjoying a certain level of competitiveness within their ensemble at school. These students conveyed an investment in their chair placement as a reflection of their effort in orchestra.

> Eli: I had a friend that I was really close to at the time, that was a violin with me. And we would just be very competitive over it, you know, we would have a little competition to

> see who would get what chair and whatnot, you know. So, that was also like an extra motivation, but it was really just me liking the music, because if you like the music, why wouldn't you play better on it, you know?

Liam and Serena echoed this sentiment, feeling that the small level of competition within their sections was a means of bonding and supporting each other in musical development—"we're all wanting to be better" (Serena, Interview 3). Rawlings and Stoddard (2017) speculated that chair tests within ensembles may have a "disrupting effect" on developing community and connectedness in ensembles (p. 130). In the context of Pinewood, participants enjoyed the motivating aspect of internal competitiveness and did not feel it led to antagonism among students. It is important to note that students did not engage in "chair tests" at Pinewood, but instead "playing assessments"—teachers selected student seating within the ensemble based on performance in multiple playing assessments as well as other factors such as consistency in attendance and attentiveness in rehearsal. The more comprehensive nature of seating decisions at Pinewood may mitigate some of the disruptive forces identified by previous researchers. Additionally, all students represented in this research have been in orchestra for five or more years, suggesting a certain level of comfort with the hierarchical paradigm.

The hierarchy within and among ensembles functioned as a "sorting mechanism" (Camfield, 2016, p. 60) in which skills and capacities linked to specific racial groups—based on structural access to lessons and resources—were prioritized in the placement into more selective ensembles. Comments about financial considerations reveals the intersecting role of race and class as student participants both tacitly and explicitly linked access to lessons and resources to white and Asian students who received greater promotion within the Pinewood orchestra.

Even though students did not heavily participate in external individual competitions, they discussed the prominent role of the UIL ensemble adjudication each year. In a "normal" school year, students enjoyed the build-up of working towards UIL and "the little things along the way… that really make it feel like UIL and not like anything else" (Serena, Interview 3). However, students were disenchanted by the process of submitting a pre-recorded UIL evaluation this school year. Liam felt the process was "unrealistic" and many discussed a lack of motivation: "it's just a bunch of recordings and we really get no satisfaction" (Eli, Interview 2).

In a school year where students and teachers were facing unprecedented challenges, students felt additional tensions and teacher stress surrounding UIL. Ms. B discussed how the Treeland fine arts director compelled her to participate in the virtual UIL process, despite reservations. Cindy articulated the converging forces increasing the pressure surrounding UIL this year.

> It's a stressful time. And then whenever you bite off more than you can chew…then it gets like really stressful because you have this reputation to uphold, and like, your personal expectation of the group. And then whenever that lacks, it can be like really hard to kind of fill in the deficit between them. (Group Interview)

Serena and Eli also spoke to Mr. G's "reputation" and how they perceived additional stress this year from the compounding challenges of COVID-19. Even though students were understanding of the pressures Mr. G faced, they certainly felt it took a toll on the overall climate of orchestra this spring.

> Serena: I feel like he is under a lot of stress now, which is again, like it's understandable. But also, like, from the students' perspective, it is hard, because we're already going through this bad year. Like, come on, you could at least be a little easier. (Interview 3)

The hegemony of neoliberalism extends into music education through the practice of ensemble adjudication, especially in the case of Texas where participation in UIL is effectively compulsory

(Nussbaum, 2020; Tucker, 2020). Additionally, the UIL Concert & Sight-Reading Evaluation functions as a high-stakes accountability mechanism for secondary instrumental ensembles in Texas (Nussbaum, 2020) and limits teacher agency (Tucker, 2020). Students in this study identified elevated teacher stress surrounding UIL and recognized the level of professional capital associated with UIL outcomes for their teachers. Brewer (2010)—in his experiences teaching at a predominantly Latinx high school—similarly found that the pressures of public competition led him to lose sight of the "altruistic ideals of education" (p. 62).

Khalifa et al. (2013) assert that school leaders have uncritically embraced the meaning behind the outcome of neoliberal data mechanisms. Within Texas, music education stakeholders view UIL outcomes as indicators of teacher success (Nussbaum, 2020; Tucker, 2020). As a result, teachers place substantial time and effort into preparation every school year—Powell (in press) argues this leads music teachers to engage in a "one-dimensional practice" in which all instructional efforts are directed towards success in external competitive structures.

Whether or not competitive events such as UIL, Solo & Ensemble, and All-Region are the cause, students describe a landscape of instruction that is solely focused on the transmission of Western European art music through notation. In my conversations with students, I came to realization that they solely conceived of string instruments as classical instruments, with little to no knowledge beyond the skills necessary for orchestral playing. Students in the top ensemble described an experience that prepared them for semi-professional musicianship (Kratus, 2019). Cindy: "I feel like when you're in [the top ensemble], you put the hours in, put the time in. It's kind of like a reflection of what you're going to have to do if you want to pursue this."

Conceptualization of high school as a training ground for real life fits into broader neoliberal paradigms in which education is conceived as preparation for professional success.

All students were deeply invested in the Pinewood orchestra program, expressed enjoyment in music-making and an interest in continuing to play their instrument after graduation. Yet, the narrow focus on the Western art music paradigm prevented students from developing knowledge or skills to engage in independent music-making beyond high school. Students such as Claudia, Cindy, and Eli struggled to articulate the capacity in which they saw themselves playing beyond high school. While Serena, Liam, and Jacob all mentioned specific musical interests, they did not currently possess the musical skills—such as transcription, learning by ear, or even simple clef transposition—to be able to actualize these desires. "Lack of knowledge about future possibilities among so many [former music education students] suggests that there are likely many people in society who wish to be musically active but who are simply unaware of the options available to them" (Mantie, 2015, p. 179).

It is also possible that students struggled to envision a future in which they were not involved in music-making due to the central role in shaping their high school experience. Adolescents orient identity and social life around their involvement in a school music ensemble (Pitts & Robinson, 2016). In contrast to students like Claudia and Liam who already engaged in individual musical exploration, students like Serena and Cindy who were more invested in the collective experiences of orchestra may have a difficult time finding a fulfilling musical organization outside of the unique structure of school music (Mantie, 2015; Pitts & Robinson, 2016).

Due to the high-stakes nature and public visibility of competitions within music

education, especially in Texas, teachers may limit the scope of instruction to focus solely on performing notation-based Western European art music, preventing students from receiving more comprehensive musical instruction. Additionally, ensemble-level competitive structures limit teachers' agency and leads to tensions within the classroom. Competitive structures within school orchestra programs are based on meritocratic ideology which is complicit in the development and maintenance of racial inequality in education.

Implications

Music teachers have a responsibility to interrogate hegemonic norms of whiteness and meritocracy within music education and how they manifest inequity. Examinations and conversations ought to occur on both a campus-level and within larger structures of music education, such as professional organizations and teacher preparation programs. On an individual level, music teachers must first identify how hegemonic norms create inequity within their own program so they may develop context-specific solutions. Below I list some questions that provide a point of departure for such interrogations at a campus-level:

- To what extent do the demographics of your ensembles reflect the demographics of your school at large? Do you notice different trends in different ensembles?
- If you have skill-based ensembles, how do you place students into these ensembles? Do you assign "audition" material that incorporates skills and techniques that would be difficulty to master without outside instruction?
- What fees, materials, and additional expenses do you require of your students? Are all students required to rent an instrument from a third-party instrument shop?
- How do you go about collecting these fees and what is your process if a student is unable to provide a fee or acquire their own materials? What is the system for students to communicate need of financial assistance?

- Do you require students to attend rehearsals outside of school hours on a regular basis? If so, how do you accommodate for students who struggle to find transportation?
- What considerations and accommodations do you provide for students who assist in childcare at home or have a work conflict?
- How do you remove barriers for students while respecting student privacy and not compromising dignity?

As suggested by the first question above, teachers need to be mindful about racial representation within their ensembles and alter practices that may result in inequities along lines of race and class. Students at Pinewood were able to clearly articulate racial trends they observed within the orchestra program and expressed an awareness of an underrepresentation of Black students in particular. Despite research that consistently demonstrates lower representation of low-income students and Black and Latinx students in orchestra programs, researchers have identified a wide variety of factors leading to this disproportionality. As such, teachers must determine context-specific barriers, whether generated from practices within their own program or broader campus structures, and work to actively remedy the imbalance.

Whether intended or not, music teachers in the present study reinforced white hegemony in orchestra, which implicitly communicated to students a diminished sense of belonging. Findings from this study suggest that students do not necessarily enter into orchestra with preconceived notions of race-based stereotypes, but these instead develop over time. Teachers need to be cognizant of personal implicit biases and stereotypes and how these are manifest within the classroom. Music teachers should refrain from repeating or perpetuating group image stereotypes, especially with humorous intent, and engage students in dialogue regarding the cumulative harm and exclusionary nature of perpetuating stereotypes

both within orchestra in and beyond. To further combat the white image of orchestra, teachers need to provide representation of string playing and string musicians that reflect their students' identities and the wide array of professional string players within and beyond Western art music. Representation should extend to repertoire by racially diverse composers, sharing videos of racially and musically diverse performers, and seeking out clinicians and guest artists to interact with their students.

As discussed, structural elements of school music participation are built on white, suburban assumptions pertaining to financial and time commitments. In order to address issues relating to resources and financial commitments, music teachers should provide all necessary materials and limit requests for additional funds. Presently, many orchestra programs operate from the assumption that students will independently rent their own instrument, acquire consumable materials (eg. rosin, method books, reeds), pay a participation fee, and secure transportation to rehearsals and other events beyond school hours. Rather than placing the onus on students or families to request accommodations and financial assistance, teachers could readily advertise the ability to use school-provided instruments and materials alongside the option to acquire from an outside source. Also, rather than requiring fees, teachers could consider implementing a pay-what-you-can model for any additional funding necessary. However, I suggest that teachers refrain from supplementing with fundraising that involves selling goods or requesting labor in exchange for paying down fees. Such options place already financially marginalized students and families in a position of taking on extra work and consuming non-essential goods, placing further strains on families facing economic hardship. When considering barriers such as transportation and scheduling, teachers should minimize or

eliminate rehearsals and sectionals that require personal transportation. Such practices exclude students who rely on school transportation or have responsibilities contributing to household income or childcare. However, some districts with large proportions of students who rely on school transportation have adopted “late buses” for secondary campuses. These allow students to stay after school for a designated activity (e.g., fine arts, athletics, tutoring) and still have access to district-provided transportation. Music teachers could develop a coalition with other arts and athletics teachers to advocate for the implementation of similar transportation options to increase accessibility.

Teachers should simultaneously work to remove potential barriers to access and explore opportunities to engage with students at a younger age. Participants in this study discussed how not all students may not have the opportunity to develop an interest or curiosity in string playing due to lack of home exposure. Additionally, string instruments are frequently associated with class status and assumed to require a substantial financial commitment. Thus parents, especially parents who did not attend U.S. public schools, may be unaware of school-based opportunities to engage in string instruction. As such, string teachers working in districts with high immigrant populations should explore opportunities to engage students at a younger age through outreach opportunities. Teachers at the secondary level could arrange to have student ensembles perform at local festivals and other days of celebration. Not only does this increase visibility and knowledge of local string programs, but also provides an opportunity to integrate into the community and engage with current students within their own cultural spaces.

Scholars and activists have developed innovative community and school-based projects that promote the arts a vehicle to empower students of color and provide lessons in social

justice (Gutiérrez-Vicario, 2016; Hanley, 2011). However, as Cindy states, racism is "not just a person of color problem…it's an everyone problem." Scholars largely agree that social justice movements should be "led by the folks who bear the brunt of racism/oppression" (p. 62), but white allies also have a responsibility to mobilize and educate within their own community to dismantle structure that affirm white supremacy (Leonard & Misumi, 2016). Given that music educators, and especially orchestra teachers, are predominantly white (Elpus, 2015; Gillespie & Hamann, 1998) we have a responsibility as a profession to understand how systems and structures develop a white norm. White music educators must engage and educate fellow members in the field on the ways in which systemic racism manifests in music education and create spaces of solidarity and coconspiracy (Love, 2019) with colleagues of color. Students in this study experienced a burden to educate their peers who exhibited racially insensitive behavior—white music educators need to enter into the role of educating white peers and students so as not to relegate this task to those experiencing marginalization and oppression.

Competitive structures within the Pinewood orchestra program manifested racialized outcomes that students easily identified. Orchestra teachers may consider deemphasizing the role of competition and student comparison within their programs. While nearly all students enjoyed the motivating element of the chair system, teachers could develop new mechanisms to recognize students within the ensemble outside of ability-based systems that reinforce meritocratic paradigms. The process of auditioning students into ability-based ensembles is also a structure that would manifest inequities due to differentials in students' access to lessons and ability to practice outside of class. Teachers should select audition material that only incorporates skills that all students had the opportunity to learn in the course of school-based

instruction. Teachers also promoted participation in external competitive structures such All-Region and Solo & Ensemble, especially for students in the top ensemble. Practices such as this center the expectation that students take lessons to achieve greater success within the orchestra program.

Furthermore, the fact that students in the most selective ensemble have access to the largest amount of dedicated rehearsal time functions to widen the gap of playing ability between ensembles. Rather than rely on external private lessons to develop independent technique, teachers may consider scheduling students in smaller heterogenous classes during the school day in which they can focus on developing technique and explore additional musical paradigms in addition to performing notated string orchestra music. Typical class sizes of 30-40 students inhibits teachers' ability to provide individualized instruction and personalized feedback, making it difficult for students without private lessons or ability to practice outside of school the opportunity to further develop their musicianship. Smaller classes would also alleviate scheduling challenges that secondary music teachers often face with large, ability-based ensembles. The default of class-based instruction would no longer be a string ensemble rehearsal, but open to more expansive forms of music-making and provides greater flexibility for students and teachers. Student could then attend after school rehearsals (meeting a few times a week, with access to late buses) to engage in the large ensemble experience. Such adjustments would help shift the focus from developing students as assets to competition and onto comprehensive musicianship.

Students in this study voiced a desire to engage in music-making beyond high school but struggled to envision this path. Several students discussed an interest in continuing to engage in

a large orchestral ensemble, while others were interested in independent and eclectic forms of music-making. Either way students were equally unsure how to actualize these visions. As such, teachers need to provide more opportunities to discuss and support students in transitioning into forms of music making past high school. Teachers could embed instruction that allow students to independently engage in music including: practical topics of instrument maintenance, finding college and community ensembles, preparing for auditions, booking gigs and/or volunteer performances. Community and collegiate music ensembles also have the opportunity to collaborate in the development of infrastructure to support students' transition into music ensembles after high school. The inclusion of broader forms of music making would also allow students to be more adaptable and flexible and engage in popular or vernacular music—a desire expressed by several participants.

Future Research

In this study, I identified possible barriers for Black and Latinx students; however researchers need to further examine factors leading to disproportional representation (Elpus & Abril, 2011; 2019; Kinney 2010; 2019). Such studies could examine the experiences of students who either abstained from or ceased participation in music ensembles in school music to understand dissuading factors. Additionally, researchers could further nuance Elpus & Abril's (2019) findings by measuring individual ensemble representation against campus demographics. Given that students observed variation in racial representation within the ensemble hierarchy, such research could help identify whether this is a widespread phenomenon.

Financial commitments associated with high school music instruction create barriers for

continued participation for some students, and little research examines the access and use of funds in music education. Researchers could further illuminate the extent of disproportionality in funding and resources among music programs in different contexts. Previous researchers have identified how schools within in a single district experienced variations in access to material and fiscal resources (Costa-Giomi & Chappell, 2007); future research could examine school music resources with a larger sample and compare both within and across school districts. Such research would be necessary for music educators to advocate for more equitable distribution of resources within their district.

White members of the music education field must not only engage but also initiate conversations that uncover and dismantle structures of racial injustice in music education. Education scholars have utilized critical whiteness studies to examine pedagogies for antiracist teaching (Matias & Mackey, 2016). Scholars in music education ought to engage in self-study and other classroom-based research to determine pedagogical approaches ideal to incorporating these topics and dialogue into music teacher education.

In this study, I sought to examine the orchestra experience of Black and Latinx students based on the underrepresentation identified by Elpus and Abril (2019). In doing so, I too assumed Asian students among the dominant group of orchestra participants, rendering Asian orchestra students' experiences of racial marginalization invisible. Future research should seek to understand and nuance the experience of Asian American students in school orchestra. Researchers in education have identified unique challenges Asian American students face due to popular stereotypes and group images (Bablak et al., 2016; Hsieh & Kim, 2020; Pang, 2006). String educators and researchers need to critically examine the ways in which master narratives

and prevailing group images of Asian students in orchestra lead to harm and exclusion.

An unexpected finding of this study was students' unanimous interest in engaging in music-making beyond high school coupled with an inability to identify pathways to achieve their vision. Given the existence of both collegiate music ensembles and community orchestras, this finding suggests a disconnect between these organizations and existing school music structures. Community music organizations and/or local university faculty could engage in action research projects that aim to develop infrastructure to support student transition from high school music into community and collegiate ensembles.

Conclusion

This instrumental case study provides a collective counterstory of Black and Latinx student experience in high school orchestra. Students attended a racially diverse, urban characteristic high school in which they were accustomed to encountering persistent and subtle forms of racism. Spatial and social factors shaped students' perceptions of belonging. Orchestra was a space in which students felt welcome and affirmed yet was not free from the everyday racial tensions students experienced in school. Students held nuanced conceptualizations of race and racism and were able to clearly articulate mechanisms through which racial marginalization manifests in school and orchestra. Through the lens of critical race theory, I examined of students' experiences to identify the ways in which everyday racism, whiteness as property, and meritocracy reaffirm white hegemony and sustain racial inequality in orchestra. Student experiences help illuminate oppressive structures in music, providing implications for classroom practice and teacher education. Scholars in music education have a responsibility to further interrogate race in racism within the field of music education, engage white peers in

dialogue to make visible harmful forces, and act in solidarity with educators of color to promote inclusion and dismantle oppressive systems.

APPENDIX A

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent for Parents with Minor Children

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY: Student-Level Competition in Title I Orchestras from the Perspective of Students from Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Groups

RESEARCH TEAM: Student Investigator: Kelsey Nussbaum, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Music Education, [redacted], kelseynussbaum@my.unt.edu. Supervising Investigator: Dr. Sean Powell, Chair, Music Education, University of North Texas, (940) 565-3717, sean.powell@unt.edu. This project is in fulfillment of Doctoral Dissertation requirements for PhD in Music Education.

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. Taking part in this study is voluntary. The investigators will explain the study to you and will any answer any questions you might have. It is your choice whether or not you allow your child to take part in this study. If you agree to have your child participate, and then choose to withdraw your child from the study, that is your right, and your decision will not be held against you.

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study about their experiences in school orchestra and their experiences with competition in this elective class.

Participation in this research study involves 3-4 interviews with your child using Zoom video conferencing software and one focus group interview with other participants in this study, also to be conducted using Zoom. More details will be provided in the next section.

You might want to participate in this study if your child is interested in sharing their experiences in school orchestra as a student from an underrepresented racial/ethnic population. However, you might not want to participate in this study if you do not feel comfortable talking about your educational and musical experiences or do not have time to participate in the interviews.

You may choose to participate in this research study if you are:

- Between the ages of 15-20
- Identify as a person from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group in orchestras: Hispanic/Latinx, Black, Native American, or mixed-race with one these identities
- Have been enrolled or are currently in school orchestra in a Title I High School
- Your high school orchestra participated in common musical competitions, such as TMEA All-Region, UIL Concert & Sight-Reading, and/or Solo & Ensemble Contest

The reasonable foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child if you choose to allow him/her to take part is discussion of personal experiences and disclosure of confidential information which you can compare to the possible benefit of increasing awareness of the experience of students in school orchestras.

Your child will not receive compensation for participation.

DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY: The following is more detailed information about this study, in addition to the information listed above.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of participating in competition-oriented, Title I high school orchestra programs from the perspective of students from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. Research questions include: (1) How do students discuss the role of orchestra in their high school experience? (2) What was the role of competition in your high school orchestra experience? (3) How has individual competition and comparison-based assessment shaped your experience in high school orchestra? (4) How do you feel like your racial/ethnic identity influenced your experiences in high school orchestra?

TIME COMMITMENT: Your participation in this study will require the following:

- Three to four (3-4) individual interviews with the student investigator, Kelsey Nussbaum, to take place between Fall 2020 – Spring 2021. Interviews will each last approximately one hour (60 minutes) and we will use Zoom videoconferencing software to complete the interviews.
- In addition to individual interviews, you will participate in a 90 minute focus-group interview with other participants in the study.
- Regular correspondence with student investigator throughout the duration of the data collection period in order to schedule interviews. Kelsey is committed to portraying your thoughts and experiences accurately in this study, which will require follow-up questions during the analysis.

STUDY PROCEDURES: Allowing your child to participate in this research study will include this list of actions that will we will ask you and your child to consider before engaging in the research:

1. Conduct initial interview to learn about your personal background and musical experiences using Zoom videoconferencing software.
2. Following interviews will take place 2-4 weeks after the previous interview.
3. In between interviews, the student investigator may send you emails to ask for your thoughts and clarification as she analyzes interview data.
4. In the Spring of 2021, after all participants have completed at least one interview, you will participate in a focus-group interview with other participants. This interview will involve a group of 3-5 participants who have similar experiences in their HS orchestra and will also take place via Zoom.

Interview Information: At any time in the study, participants will have the option to skip questions that cause discomfort. The investigator requests permission to **audio record** all interviews for the purposes of transcription and analysis.

Due to ongoing health concerns related to the COVID-19 crisis, all activities for this research will be conducted virtually. The investigator will not ask participants to engage in any in-person

activity. Additionally, all interviews and correspondence will take place outside of school hours and will not involve school resources or personnel.

AUDIO/VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHY: The investigator requests permission to **audio record** all interviews for the purposes of transcription and analysis. Any identifying information will be kept confidential and I will use a pseudonym for all presentations of this work.

☐ **I agree** to have my child audio recorded during the research study.

☐ **I do not agree** to have my child audio recording during the research study.

If you agree to being audio recorded during the interviews, the recording will be transcribed by Kelsey to verbatim text without any identifying information. The transcriptions and recordings will be kept with other electronic data in a secure UNT OneDrive account for the duration of the study.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS: This study may not be of any direct benefit to participants, but the student investigator hopes to contribute to the knowledge of competition in orchestra programs. Participant experiences will help contribute to body of knowledge on student experience in school orchestra programs and inform responsive practices for teaching orchestra in Title I schools. Students may benefit from making personal and educational connections within the focus group setting.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: The potential risks involved in this study are the disclosure of confidential information such as participant identity and inconvenience to your personal schedule. However, the student investigator will take several measures to protect against these risks as described in the Confidentiality section. If you agree to be in the study, please share only what you're comfortable with. You may skip a question or withdraw completely from the study at any time. Remember that [you and] your child have the right to withdraw any study procedures at any time without penalty, and may do so by informing the research team. Participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach in confidentiality. Study data will be physically and electronically secured by the research team. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security.

If you experience excessive discomfort when completing the research activity, you may choose to stop participating at any time without penalty. The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen, but the study may involve risks to the participant, which are currently unforeseeable. UNT does not provide medical services, or financial assistance for emotional distress or injuries that might happen from participating in this research. If you need to discuss your discomfort further, please contact a mental health provider, or you may contact the researcher who will refer you to appropriate services. If your need is urgent, helpful resources include: National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

This research study is not expected to pose any additional risks beyond what you would normally experience in your regular everyday life. However, if you do experience any

discomfort, please inform the research team.

COMPENSATION: There is no compensation for participation in this research.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Efforts will be made by the research team to keep [and you] your child's personal information private, including research study records, and disclosure will be limited to people who have a need to review this information. The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and de-identified with pseudonyms by the student investigator. Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored for 3 years on a password protected computer via the secure UNT server in Dr. Sean Powell's Office (MU 302), after which all files related to the study will be deleted. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study. Audio/video recordings will not be used for presentations or analyzed by anyone other than the student and supervising investigators. Research records will be labeled with a pseudonym and the master key linking names with codes will be maintained in a separate and secure location.

Video Interviews: Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree possible given the technology and practices used by the video conferencing software Zoom. Your participation with this software involves risks to confidentiality similar to a person's everyday use of the internet. For details, please see the following link regarding privacy policy for Zoom (https://zoom.us/privacy).

Focus Groups: Please be advised that although the researchers will take these steps to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

The results of this study may be published and/or presented without naming you as a participant. The data collected about you for this study may be used for future research studies that are not described in this consent form. If that occurs, an IRB would first evaluate the use of any information that is identifiable to you, and confidentiality protection would be maintained.

This research uses a third party software called Zoom and is subject to the privacy policies of this software noted here: https://zoom.us/privacy .

While absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the research team will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your records, as described here and to the extent permitted by law. In addition to the research team, the following entities may have access to your records, but only on a need-to-know basis: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the FDA (federal regulating agencies), the reviewing IRB, and sponsors of the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY: If you have any questions about the study you may contact Kelsey Nussbaum at KelseyNussbaum@my.unt.edu

[redeacted] or Dr. Sean Powell at Sean.powell@unt.edu (940) 565-3713. Any questions you have regarding your rights as a research subject, or complaints about the research may be directed to the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 940-565-4643, or by email at untirb@unt.edu.

CONSENT:

- Your signature below indicates that you have read, or have had read to you all of the above.
- You confirm that you have been told the possible benefits, risks, and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that your child does not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to allow participation, or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits.
- You understand your child's rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to allow your child to participate in this study; you also understand that the study personnel may choose to stop your child's participation at any time.
- By signing, you are not waiving any of [you and] your child's legal rights.

Please sign below if you are at least 18 years of age and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT OR GUARDIAN **DATE**

***If you agree to participate, please provide a signed copy of this form to the researcher team. They will provide you with a copy to keep for your records.**

SIGNATURE OF CHILD PARTICIPANT **DATE**

***If you agree to participate, please provide a signed copy of this form to the researcher team. They will provide you with a copy to keep for your records.**

For the Principal Investigator or Designee:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

_____ _____

Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee Date

Informed Consent for Parents with Minor Children
Assent for Child Participation – Ages 13-17

By agreeing to participate in this research study, you confirm that you have read or have had read to you the entire informed consent document. You understand that you can ask questions, or decide to withdraw your participation at any time without any penalty to you.
You will indicate your participation is voluntary by providing signature on the consent document.

APPENDIX B

TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent for Studies with Adults

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY: Student-Level Competition in Title I Orchestras from the Perspective of Students from Underrepresented Racial/Ethnic Groups

RESEARCH TEAM: Student Investigator: Kelsey Nussbaum, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Music Education, [redeacted], kelseynussbaum@my.unt.edu. Supervising Investigator: Dr. Sean Powell, Chair, Music Education, University of North Texas, (940) 565-3717, sean.powell@unt.edu. This project is in fulfillment of Doctoral Dissertation requirements for PhD in Music Education.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Taking part in this study is voluntary. The investigators will explain the study to you and will any answer any questions you might have. It is your choice whether or not you take part in this study. If you agree to participate and then choose to withdraw from the study, that is your right, and your decision will not be held against you.

You are being asked to take part in a research study about student experience and teacher perceptions of student-level competition, such as TMEA All-Region/State and UIL Solo & Ensemble, in the Title I high school orchestra classroom.

Your participation in this research study involves two one-on-one interviews and regular communication with the student investigator via email. One-on-one interviews will require approximately one hour of your time per interview and will be conducted using Zoom video conferencing software More details will be provided in the next section.

You might want to participate in this study if you want to share your experience as an orchestra teacher working in a Title I school with a history of participating in competitive events. To participate, you must be an ensemble music teacher in Texas schools and you must be willing to reflect on personal experiences, teaching practices, and the role of student-level competition in your classroom. However, you might not want to participate in this study if you do not have time to participate in interviews or if you do not want to be asked in-depth questions about your teaching experiences and views on music competition.

The reasonable, foreseeable risks or discomforts to you if you choose to take part are the disclosure of confidential information such as participant identity and inconvenience to your personal schedule. You can compare these risks to the lack of possible personal benefit. You will not receive compensation for participation.

DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY: The following is more detailed information about this study, in addition to the information listed above.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this study is to examine the student experience of participating in competition-oriented, Title I high school orchestra programs. I will investigate

this topic from both the student and teacher perspective. Research questions include: (1) How do students discuss the role of orchestra in their high school experience? (2) What was the role of competition in student's high school orchestra experience? (3) How has individual competition and comparison-based assessment shaped student experience in high school orchestra?

TIME COMMITMENT: Your participation in this study will require the following:

- Two one-on-one interviews with the student investigator that will be scheduled at your convenience throughout the Fall 2020 – Spring 2021. Interviews will each last approximately one hour (60 minutes) and we will use Zoom videoconferencing software to complete the interviews.
- Regular email correspondence throughout duration of study with the student investigator. Kelsey is committed to portraying your thoughts and experiences accurately in this study, which will require follow-up questions and your input into her analytic processes. Email will be the best way for the two of you to keep an open line of communication going.

STUDY PROCEDURES: Please see a step-by-step outline of study procedures below.

1. Interviews will take place outside of school hours and school buildings. Interview questions will center on your experiences, perceptions of the student experience, and interpretation of your adjudicated events.
2. In between interviews, the student investigator will send you emails to ask for your thoughts and clarification as she analyzes interview data. Investigator may also ask questions based on information obtained in student interviews.

All research will take place between November 2020 and March 2021. No parts of this study are experimental.

Interview Information: At any time in the study, participants will have the option to skip questions that cause discomfort. The investigator requests permission to **audio record** all interviews for the purposes of transcription and analysis.

Due to ongoing health concerns related to the COVID-19 crisis, all activities for this research will be conducted virtually. The investigator will not ask participants to engage in any in-person activity. Additionally, all interviews and correspondence will take place outside of school hours and will not involve school resources or personnel.

AUDIO/VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHY: The investigator requests permission to **audio record** all interviews for the purposes of transcription and analysis. Any identifying information will be kept confidential and I will use a pseudonym for all presentations of this work.

☐ **I agree** to be audio recorded during the research study.

☐ **I do not agree** to be audio recorded during the research study.

You may participate in the study if you do not agree to be audio recorded. If you agree to being audio recorded during the interviews, the recording will be transcribed by Kelsey to verbatim text without any identifying information. The transcriptions and recordings will be kept with other electronic data in a secure UNT OneDrive account for the duration of the study. Contest observations will not be recorded.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS: This study may not be of any direct benefit to you if you choose to participate, but the student investigator hopes to contribute to the knowledge of student-level competition and the experience of music educators in these events in order to better understand of their impact on the lives of teachers and students.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: The potential risks involved in this study are the disclosure of confidential information such as participant identity and inconvenience to your personal schedule. However, the student investigator will take several measures to protect against these risks as described in the Confidentiality section. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you agree to be in the study, please share only what you're comfortable with. You may skip a question or withdraw completely from the study at any time without penalty by informing the research team. Participation is completely voluntary and you have the freedom to decline without penalty to your career reputation or pre-existing relationship with the student investigator if one exists.

Participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach in confidentiality. Study data will be physically and electronically secured by the research team. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security.

If you experience excessive discomfort when completing the research activity, you may choose to stop participating at any time without penalty. The student investigator will try to prevent any problem that could happen, but the study may involve risks to the participant that are currently unforeseeable. UNT does not provide medical services or financial assistance for emotional distress or injuries that might happen from participating in this research. If you need to discuss your discomfort further, please contact a mental health provider, or you may contact the researcher who will refer you to appropriate services. If your need is urgent, please call 1-800-273-8255, which is a hotline to emotional support during crisis.

COMPENSATION: There is no compensation for this research.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Efforts will be made by the research team to keep your personal information private, including research study, and disclosure will be limited to people who have a need to review this information. The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and de-identified with pseudonyms by the student investigator. Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored for 3 years on a password protected computer via the secure UNT server in Dr. Sean Powell's Office (MU 302), after which all files related to the study will be deleted. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or

presentations regarding this study. Audio recordings will not be used for presentations or analyzed by anyone other than the student and supervising investigators. Research records will be labeled with a pseudonym and the master key linking names with pseudonyms will be maintained in a separate and secure location.

The results of this study may be published and/or presented without naming you as a participant. The data collected about you for this study may be used for future research studies that are not described in this consent form. If that occurs, an IRB would first evaluate the use of any information that is identifiable to you, and confidentiality protection would be maintained.

While absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the research team will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your records, as described here and to the extent permitted by law. In addition to the research team, the following entities may have access to your records, but only on a need-to-know basis: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the FDA (federal regulating agencies), the reviewing IRB, and sponsors of the study.

Video Interviews: Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree possible given the technology and practices used by the video conferencing software Zoom.
This research uses a third party softward called Zoom and is subject to the privacy policies of this software noted here: https://zoom.us/privacy

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY: If you have any questions about the study you may contact Kelsey Nussbaum at KelseyNussbaum@my.unt.edu [redacted] or Dr. Sean Powell at Sean.powell@unt.edu (940) 565-3713. Any questions you have regarding your rights as a research subject, or complaints about the research may be directed to the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 940-565-4643 or by email at untirb@unt.edu.

CONSENT:

- Your signature below indicates that you have read, or have had read to you all of the above.
- You confirm that you have been told the possible benefits, risks, and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study; you also understand that the study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- By signing, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Please sign below if you are at least 18 years of age and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT **DATE**

***If you agree to participate, please provide a signed copy of this form to the researcher team. They will provide you with a copy to keep for your records.**

APPENDIX C

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviews will be semi-structured, but questions will be asked in order that is organic and emergent based on responses obtained in the process of interview. Though the thematic material for each interview will adhere to the provided outline, content and order of questions will be determined based upon ongoing analysis of previous interviews. Follow-up questions may arise that cannot be anticipated at this time.
Individual Interviews

First Interview –Background
Personal Identity

- Talk about your family and upbringing
- What has been the role of music in your household and for the rest of your family?
- What is your racial/ethnic identity? Describe the role of race/ethnicity in your life?
- What is the racial/ethnic and socio-economic texture of your community?

Beginning School Orchestra

- Explain in-depth what you remember about the recruitment process for joining orchestra and why you chose to join.
- What was your experience like throughout middle school orchestra?
- What types of musical activities did you participate in as part of orchestra? What is your favorite memory from middle school orchestra?
- Was there a cost associated with being in orchestra? For what specifically? Has it ever been hard for your family to pay for your orchestra fees?
- Did you face any challenges in middle school orchestra or ever consider quitting?
    - If yes, what were some of the reasons you considered quitting?

Interview 2
Musical & Educational Context

- Talk about your high school at large and your immediate friend group.
    - How do you see yourself within the larger school population?
- Describe your orchestra program. Talk about your teachers, the structure of the groups, friends in orchestra, student demographics.
- What made you interested in being a part of school orchestra/playing your instrument?
- How would you describe your musical identity?
- What type of music do you listen to outside of orchestra?
- Musical Development
- What do you enjoy most about your orchestra experience?
- Thinking of a typical week in your life, what is your routine for playing and practicing? How has this changed with COVID-19?
- Have you taken private lessons or participated in any community ensembles (like youth orchestra)?
- How does your family support your musicianship?
- How have your teachers supported your musicianship? Has one of your teachers stood out as being particularly influential?

- Once you have graduated high school, how do you see yourself continuing your musicianship?

Competition & Hierarchy

- Are there multiple levels of orchestra at your school? If so, what is the process for placing students in different ensembles?
- Do (did) you have ranked chair placements in your orchestra? How were these seats determined?
- What is your process for preparing for playing tests, auditions, or contest?
- Have you ever participated in solo & ensemble or All-Region? What were your experiences in these events?
- Talk a little bit about your experiences in preparing for and attending the UIL Concert & Sight-Reading event.

Interview 3

Representation

- Have you had any music teachers that shared your racial identity?
    - If yes, what was the relevance of this to you?
    - In no, did you feel this made it more difficult for the teacher to understand you or meet your needs as a student?
- What os the level of representation of students of color in your orchestra classes? Did you notice any trends with racial/ethnic identity and orchestra level or chair placement?
- Thinking of images you saw, music you listened to in class, and pieces you have performed, how much diversity was there?

Focus Group

Emergent design; some questions will overlap with individual interview questions, but responses will likely further develop due to group interaction.

- Everyone please introduce yourself and share a little bit about why you chose to join orchestra.
- Talk a little bit about your experiences with music inside and outside of school.
- What did (do) you enjoy most about being in orchestra? Least?
- What did you perceive to be the overall goal of your orchestra teachers? What is most important to them?
- Have any of you had a moment where you considered quitting orchestra? If so, would you talk about why.
- What factors influenced your decisions to continue orchestra participation? Have your reasons for staying change over time?
- What was the role of competition in your orchestra program? Share any positive memorable experiences you had participating in a musical competition? Any memorable negative experiences?

APPENDIX D

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviews will be semi-structured, but questions will be asked in order that is organic and emergent based on responses obtained in the process of interview. Though the thematic material for each interview will adhere to the provided outline, content and order of questions will be determined based upon ongoing analysis of previous interviews. Follow-up questions may arise that cannot be anticipated at this time.
Individual Interviews

Background Information

- Educational background
- Teaching experience

Current Teaching Position

- History and culture of school
- Talk to me about the overall structure of the orchestra program. What is your role?
- What do you enjoy most about teaching? Teaching at this school?
- Talk about some of the challenges you face.

Students

- Describe your students in the orchestra program. Do you feel the students are representative of the campus?
- What supports do you offer to help students succeed in orchestra?
- What do see as some of the main reasons that students choose to quit orchestra?
- What do you see as some factors that help or inhibit a students' ability to participate in orchestra?
- Talk a bit about the type of parent support and involvement you have with your program.

Competition in Your Program

- Talk about the competitive activities in which your students participate
- What is your approach to ensemble competition? Individual Competition?
- How do the various competitive events impact your teaching and decision-making?
- What is role/value of students participating in individual competition?
- How do you describe your students' attitudes toward competitive events?

Competition at Large

- Describe the expectations of your administration (both campus and fine arts) surrounding the various competitions.
- What do you believe to be the purpose of individual competition? Ensemble competition?
- Talk a little bit about the professional expectations surrounding competition.
- What do you perceive to be the broader role of competition in the field of music education?

Teaching Philosophy

- Describe your teaching philosophy.
- What are your priorities in teaching? How have these changed over time?
- How do you define success?
- What is your goal for your students while they are in orchestra? What about when they graduate?

REFERENCES

Abeles, H. (2004). The effect of three orchestra/school partnerships on students' interest in instrumental music instruction. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 52*(3), 248–263. https://doi.org/10.2307/3345858

Abramo, J. M. (2017). The phantasmagoria of competition in school ensembles. Philosophy of Music Education Review, 25(2), 150–170. https://doi.org/10.2979/philmusieducrevi.25.2.04

Abril, C. R. & Gault, B. M. (2008). The state of music in secondary schools: A principal's perspective. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 56*(1), 68–81. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429408317516.

Akom, A. (2004). *Ameritocracy: The racing of our nation's children* (Publication No. 3137973). [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania]. ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global.

Akom, A. A. (2008). Ameritocracy and infra-racial racism: Radicalizing social and cultural reproduction theory in the twenty-first century. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 11*, 205–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320802291116

Alemán, Jr, E., & Alemán, S. M. (2010). 'Do Latin@ interests always have to "converge" with white interests?': (Re)claiming racial realism and interest-convergence in critical race theory praxis. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320903549644

Alexander, C. C. (1962). Prophet of American racism: Madison Grant and the Nordic myth. *Phylon, 23*(1), 73–90.

Allsup, R. E. (2003). Mutual learning and democratic action in instrumental music education. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 51*(1), 24–37. https://doi.org/10.2307/3345646

Allsup, R. E. (2012). The moral ends of band. *Theory into Practice, 51*, 179–187. doi:10.108/00405841.2012.690288

Allsup, R. E. (2015, December). Our "Both/And" moment. Music Educator's Journal, 102(2), 85-86. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24755665

American Sociological Association. (2003). *Statement of the American Sociological Association on the importance of collecting data and doing social scientific research on race.* https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/images/press/docs/pdf/asa_race_statement.pdf

Austin, J. R. (1990). Competition: Is Music Education the Loser? *Music Educators Journal 76*(6), 21-25. https://doi.org/10.2307/3400964

Bablak, L., Raby, R., & Pomerantz, S. (2016). 'I don't want to stereotype… but it's true': Maintaining whiteness at the centre through the `smart Asian' stereotype in high school. *Whiteness and Education, 1*(1), 54–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2015.1122661

Bailey, M. A. (2018). Examination of the relationships between socioeconomic status and music student achievement in state-level performing groups. *Texas Music Education Research, 2018,* 3-17. https://www.tmea.org/wp-content/uploads/Research/TexasMusicEducationResearch_2018.pdf

Bali, V. A. and Alvarez, R. M. (2004). The race gap in student achievement scores: Longitudinal evidence from a racially diverse school district. *Policy Studies Journal, 32*, 393-415. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2004.00072.x

Barnes, G. V. & McCashin, R. (2005). Practices and procedures in state adjudicated orchestra festivals. Update: Applications of Research in Music Education, 23(2), 34–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/87551233050230020105

Bell, D. A. (2005). The unintended lessons in *Brown v. Board of Education*. *New York Law School Law Review, 49*(4), 1053-1067. https:// digitalcommons.nyls.edu/nyls_law_review/vol49/iss4/3/

Berenson, G. (2008). Competitions, recitals and auditions—Oh my! *American Music Teacher,* February/March, 4-5.

Bergee, M. J., & McWhirter, J. L. (2005). Selected Influences on Solo and Small-Ensemble Festival Ratings: Replication and Extension. Journal of Research in Music Education, 53(2), 177–190. https://doi.org/10.1177/002242940505300207

Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M. & Robson, K. (2001). *Introducing qualitative methods: Focus groups in social research.* SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209175

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2013). *Racism without the racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America* (5th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.

Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture.* Sage.

Bradley, D. (2006). Music education, multiculturalism, and anti-racism – Can we talk? *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education, 5*(2), http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bradley5_2.pdf

Brewer, W. D. (2010). Inside/outside: School music on "the line." In L. Thompson & M. Campbell (Eds.), *Issues of identity in music education: Narratives and practices* (pp. 37–64). Information Age.

Boutte, G.S., Lopez-Robertson, J. & Powers-Costello, E. (2011). Moving beyond colorblindness in early childhood classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal 39*, 335–342. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-011-0457-x

Butler, A., Lind, V. L., & McKoy, C. L. (2007). Equity and access in music education: Conceptualizing culture as barriers to and supports for music learning. *Music Education Research, 9*(2), 241–253. https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800701384375

Buyer, P. (2005). Teaching the values of competition. *Teaching Music, 13*(1), 28-31.

Calmore, J. O. (1992). Critical race theory, Archie Sheep and fire music: Securing an authentic intellectual life in a multicultural world. *Southern California Law Review, 65*(5), 2129–2230. https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/scal65&i=2148

Carter Andrews, D. J. (2012). Black achievers' experiences with racial spotlighting and ignoring in a predominantly White high school. *Teachers College Record, 114*, 1–46. https:// www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=16780

Chandler, G. & Mizener, C. P. (2011). Perspectives of elementary general music teachers on factors influencing student participation in secondary music ensembles. *Texas Music Education Research, 2011,* 13-23. https://www.tmea.org/wp-content/uploads/Research/TexasMusicEducationResearch_2011.pdf

Chappell, E. W. (2013). Predictors of instrumental music enrollment: How school policies may influence retention in Title I and non-Title I public schools. [Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin]. UT Electronic Theses and Dissertations. http://hdl.handle.net/2152/22988

Chappell, E. & Nussbaum, K. (2019, September 12-14). *The status of orchestra programs in the state of Texas* [Poster presentation]. Research poster, Symposium on Music Teacher Education, Greensboro, NC.

Charles, C. Z. (2003). The dynamics of racial residential segregation. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29,* 167-207

Chenoweth, G. (1947). What shall we do about competition? *Music Educators Journal, 33*(3), 20–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/3388451

Chiu, L. & Knight, D. (1999). How useful are focus groups for obtaining the views of minority groups?. In Barbour, R. S., & Kitzinger, J. (Eds.) *Developing Focus Group Research* (pp. 99-112). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208857

Cline, E. (1982a). The competition explosion: Impact on education — Part I. *The American Music Teacher, 31*(3), 9-12. https:// www.jstor.org/stable/43538490

Cline, E. (1982b). The competition explosion: Impact on education — Part II. *The American Music Teacher, 31*(4), 8-13. https:// www.jstor.org/stable/ 43538490

Costa-Giomi, E & Chappell, E (2007). Characteristics of band programs in a large urban school district: Diversity or Inequality? *Journal of Band Research, 42*, (2), 1-18.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Sage.

Cruse, C., & Powers, D. (2006). Estimating school district poverty with FRPL data. *U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Estimates Branch*. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2006/demo/crusepowers2006asa.pdf

Dame, N. (2010). Effect of socioeconomic status on musical achievement as reflected in Texas U.I.L. Choral Contest Ratings. *Texas Music Education Research*, 2010, 10-21. https://www.tmea.org/wp-content/uploads/Research/TexasMusicEducationResearch_2010.pdf

DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using Critical Race Theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education.*Educational Researcher, 33*(5), 26–31. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033005026

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction.* New York University.

DeLorenzo, L. C. (2012). Missing faces from the orchestra: An issue of social justice? *Music Educators Journal 98*(4), 39-46. https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432112443263

Diamond, J. B., Posey- Maddox, L., & Velázquez, M. D. (2021). Reframing suburbs: Race, place, and opportunity in suburban educational spaces. *Educational Researcher, 50*(4), 249–255. https:// doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20972676

Domina, T., Pharris-Ciurej, N., Penner, A. M., Penner, E. K., Brummet, Q., Porter, S. R., & Sanabria, T. (2018). Is free and reduced-price lunch a valid measure of educational disadvantage? *Educational Researcher, 47*(9), 539–555. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X18797609

Doucet, F., & Adair, J. K. (2013). Addressing race and inequity in the classroom. *Young Children, 68*(5), 88–92,94–97.

Dudziak, M. L. (2000). Cold War civil rights: Race and the image of American democracy. Princeton University Press.

Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates. (n.d). *Locale boundaries.* National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved December 27, 2020, from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Geographic/LocaleBoundaries

Elpus, K. (2015). Music teacher licensure candidates in the United States: A demographic profile and analysis of licensure examination scores. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 63*(3), 314–335. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429415602470

Elpus, K. & Abril, C. R. (2011). High school music ensemble students in the United States: A demographic profile. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 59*, 128-145. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429411405207

Elpus, K., & Abril, C. R. (2019). Who enrolls in high school music? A national profile of U.S. students, 2009–2013. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 67*(3), 323–338. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429419862837

Elpus, K. & Grise, A. (2019). Music booster groups: Alleviating or exacerbating funding inequality in American public school music education? *Journal of Research in Music Education, 67*, 6-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429417712433

Epperson, L. (2008). Undercover power: Examining the role of the executive branch in determining the meaning and scope of school integration jurisprudence. *Journal of African American Law & Policy, 10*(2), 146-180.

Escalante, S. I. (2019). Latinx students and secondary music education in the United States. *Update, 37*(3), 5–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123318802335

Escalante, S. (2019). *When does race matter in music education?: An exploration of race, racial hegemony, and predominantly Latinx secondary music programs through the theory of racial formation*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of North Texas]. UNT Digital Library. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1609151/m1/2/

Fermanich, M. L. (2011). Money for music education: A district analysis of how, what, and where of spending for music education. *Journal of Education Finance, 37,* 130-149. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/456335

Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2006). The effect of instrumental music participation and socioeconomic status on Ohio fourth-, sixth-, and ninth-grade proficiency test performance. J*ournal of Research in Music Education, 54*(1), 73-84. https://doi.org/10.1177/002242940605400106

Fitzpatrick, K. R., Henninger, J. C., & Taylor, D. M. (2014). Access and retention of marginalized populations within undergraduate music education degree programs. Journal of Research in Music Education, 62(2), 105-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429414530760

Floyd, R. (2005). Music course enrollments - The numbers are in. *Southwestern Musician, October,* 64.

Floyd, R. & Coachman, F. (1999). A historical perspective of music alignment in the state of Texas: An interview with Dr. Nelson G. Patrick, Director of Music Activities, UIL, 1960-1984. Southwestern Musician – Texas Music Educator, October, 40-45.

Forbes, G. W. (1994). Evaluative music festivals and contests—Are they fair? Update: Applications of Research in Music Education, 12(2), 16–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/875512339401200203

Frey, W. H. (2000). Melting pot suburbs: A census 2000 study of suburban diversity. *Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy*. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/frey.pdf

Frey, W. H. (2018). *Diversity explosion: How new racial demographics are remaking America.* Brookings Institution.

Garcia, E. (2020). Schools are still segregated, and black children are paying a price. *Economic Policy Institute.* https://epi.org/185814

Gay, G. (2010). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Gerrard, C. L. (2018). "It's More Than Playing Music": Perceptions of a Concert Band Program from Members of a Predominantly Latino School Community. [Doctoral Dissertation, Ohio State University]. OhioLink Electronic Theses & Dissertation Center. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1524211163607595

Gerrard, C. L. (2021). "It's More Than Playing Music": Exploring band in a predominantly Latinx school community. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, 227,* 67–85. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.227.0066

Gillespie, R. & Hamann, D. L. (1998). The status of orchestra programs in public schools. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 46*(1), 75-86. https://doi.org/10.2307/3345761

Gillespie, R., & Hamann, D. L. (1999). Career choice among string music education students in American colleges and universities. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 47*(3), 266–278. https://doi-org.libproxy.library.unt.edu/10.2307/3345784

Gouzouasis, P. & Henderson, A. (2012). Secondary student perspectives on musical and educational outcomes from participation in band festivals. Music Education Research, 14, 479-498. https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2012/714361

Gutiérrez-Vicario, M. A. (2016). More than a mural: The intersection of public art, immi- grant youth, and human rights. *Radical Teacher, 104*, 55–61. https://doi.org/10.5195/rt.2016.229

Hanley, M. S. (2011). You better recognize! The arts as social justice for African American students. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 44*(3), 420–444. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2011.589763

Harwell, M., & LeBeau, B. (2010). Student eligibility for a free lunch as an SES measure in education research. *Educational Researcher, 39*(2), 120–131. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X10362578

Harwood, S. A., Mendenhall, R., Lee, S. S., Riopelle, C., & Huntt, M. B. (2018). Everyday racism in integrated spaces: Mapping the experiences of students of color at a diversifying predominantly white institution. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers, 108*(5), 1245–1259. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2017.1419122

Hash, P. M. (2012). An analysis of the ratings and interrater reliability of high school band contests. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 60*, 81-100. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429411434932

Hash, P. M. (2013a). An Analysis of middle/high school band and orchestra festival ratings. *Journal of Band Research, 49*(1), 1-20.

Hash, P. M. (2013b). Large-group contest ratings and music teacher evaluation: issues and recommendations. *Arts Education Policy Review, 114*, 163-169. https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2013.826035

Hash, P. M. (2016). The National School Orchestras Contests: 1929-1937. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 63*, 397-420. https://doi.org/ 10.1177/002242941156183 73

Hess, J. (2013). *Radical musicking: Challenging dominant paradigms in elementary music education.* [PhD Thesis, University of Toronto]. TSpace. http://hdl.handle.net/1807/43593

Hess, J. (2017). Equity and music education: Euphemisms, terminal naivety, and whiteness. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education, 16*(3), 15-47. doi:10.22176/act16.3.15

Hess, J. (2018). Troubling whiteness: Music education and the "messiness" of equity work. *International Journal of Music Education, 36*(2), 128-144. https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761417703781

Holtz, E. A. (1962). The schools band contest of America. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 10*(1),3–12. https://doi.org/ 10.2307/3343906

Howard, S. A. (2012). The effect of selected nonmusical factors on adjudicators' ratings of high school solo vocal performances. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 60*, 166-185. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429412444610

Hsieh, B., & Kim, J. (2020). Challenging the invisibility of Asian Americans in education. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 42*(2), 95–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714413.2020.1760643

Humphreys, J. T. (1989). An overview of American public school bands and orchestras before World War II. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, 101*, 50-60. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40318374

Hussar, B., Zhang, J., Hein, S., Wang, K., Roberts, A., Cui, J., Smith, M., Bullock Mann, F., Barmer, A., & Dilig, R. (2020). *The condition of education 2020* (NCES 2020-144). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020144.pdf

Institute on Race and Poverty (2006). Minority suburbanization, stable integration, and economic opportunity in fifteen metropolitan regions. *Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, 109*. https://scholarship.law.umn.edu/imo_studies/109/

Irizarry, J. G., & Raible, J. (2011). Beginning with el barrio: Learning from exemplary teachers of Latino students. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 10*(3), 186–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/153 48431.2011.581102

Isensee, L. (2015, April 15). After decades of Texas school finance battles, some say little has changed. *Houston Public Media.* https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2016/04/15/145632/after-decades-of-texas-school-finance-battles-some-say-little-has-changed/

Jones, P. M. (2009). Hard and soft policies in music education: Building the capacity of teachers to understand, study, and influence them. *Arts Education Policy Review, 110*(4), 27-32. https://doi.org/10.3200/AEPR.110.4.27-32

Jones, T. R., & Chappell, E. (2021). Separate and unequal: A history of string programs and desegregation in Texas schools through the lens of Black stakeholders. [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Division of Music Education, University of North Texas.

Kao, G. (2000) Group images and possible selves among ddolescents: Linking stereotypes to expectations by race and ethnicity. *Sociological Forum 15*, 407–430. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007572209544

Kellett, J. S. (2016). Student perspectives on the music-learning culture in a competitive high school music program in the United States (Publication No. 10101049). [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Southern Mississippi]. ProQuest.

Kelly-McHale, J. L., & Abril, C. R. (2015). The space between worlds. In C. Benedict, P. Schmidt, G. Spruce, & P. Woodford (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of social justice in music education* (pp. 156–172). Oxford University Press.

Khalifa, M., Dunbar, C., & Douglasb, T. (2013). Derick Bell, CRT, and educational leadership 1995–present. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 16*(4), 489–513. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.817770

Kinney, D. W. (2008). Selected demographic variables, school music participation, and achievement test scores of urban middle school students. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 56*, 145-161. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429408322530

Kinney, D. W. (2010). Selected nonmusic predictors of urban students' decisions to enroll and persist in middle school band programs. Journal of Research in Music Education, 57, 334-350. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022419409350086

Kinney, D. W. (2019). Selected nonmusic predictors of urban students' decisions to enroll and persist in middle and high school music ensemble electives. Journal of Research in Music Education, 67, 23-44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429418809972

KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2019). *Children in poverty by race and ethnicity in the United States.* https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/44-children-in-poverty-by-race-and-ethnicity#detailed/1/any/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38/10,11,9,12,1,185,13/324,323

Kitzinger, J. & Barbour, R. (1999). Introduction: the challenge and promise of focus groups. In Barbour, R. S., & Kitzinger, J. (Eds.) Developing Focus Group Research (pp. 1-20). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208857

Kratus, J. (2007). Music education at the tipping point. *Music Educators Journal, 94*(2), 42-48.

Kvale, S. & Brinkman, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing (2nd ed.).* SAGE.

Kohli, R., Pizarro, M., & Nevárez, A. (2017). The "new racism" of K-12 schools: Centering critical research on racism. *Review of Research in Education, 41*(1), 182–202. https:// doi.org/ 10.3102/0091732X16686949

Kozol, J. (2012). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools.* Broadway. (Original work published in 1991).

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children (2nd ed). Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. & Tate, W. F., IV. (2006). Toward a critical theory of education. In Dixson, A. D. & Rousseau, C. K. (Eds.), *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God's Children Got a Song* (pp. 11-30). Routledge. (Original work published in 1995)

Latimer, M. E., Jr., Bergee, M. J., & Cohen, M. L. (2010). Reliability and perceived pedagogical utility of a weighted music performance assessment rubric. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 58,* 168-183. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429410369836

Lacour, M. & Tissington, L. D. (2011). The effects of poverty on academic achievement. *Educational Research and Reviews, 6,* 522-527.

Leonard, G., & Misumi, L. (2016). W.A.I.T. (Why am I talking?): A dialogue on solidarity, allyship, and supporting the struggle for racial justice without reproducing white supremacy. Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy, 2016, 61–74.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Lind, V. R. (1999). Classroom environment and Hispanic enrollment in secondary choral music programs. *Contributions to Music Education, 26*(2), 64-77.

Lind, V. R. & Butler, A. (2003). The relationship between African American enrollment and the classroom environment in secondary choral music programs. In K. Adams & L. Chisholm (Eds.) *Proceedings of the Phenomenon of Singing International Symposium: Vol. 4,* 105-110. https:// journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/ index.php/singing/article/ view/567/367

Lind, V. R. & McKoy, C. L. (2016). *Culturally responsive teaching in music education: From understanding to application.* Routledge.

Love. B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon.

Lowe, G. M. (2018). Competition versus cooperation: Implications for music teachers following students feedback from participation in a large-scale cooperative music festival. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 43(5), 78-94. http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v43n5.6

MacLeod, R. B., & McKoy, C. L. (2012). An exploration of the relationships between cultural background and music preferences in a diverse orchestra classroom. *String Research Journal, 3*(1), 21–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/194849921200300102

Mantie, R. (2015). Liminal or lifelong: Leisure, recreation, and the future of music education. In C. Randles (Ed.), *Music Education: Navigating the Future* (pp. 167–182). Routledge. https://doi.org/ 10.4324/9781315777009

Marz, V. & Kelchtermans, G. (2013). Sense-making and structure in teachers' reception of educational reform. A case study in the mathematics curriculum. Teaching and Teacher Education, 29, 13-24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.08.004

Massey, D. S. (1990). American apartheid: Segregation and the makings of the underclass. *American Journal of Sociology, 96*(2), 329-357. https://doi.org/10.1086/229532

Massey, D. S. & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the makings of the underclass.* Harvard.

Massey, D. S., Roswell, J., & Domina, T. (2009). The changing bases of segregation in the United States. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 626*(1):74–90.

Matias, C. E. & Mackey, J. (2016). Breakin' down whiteness in antiracist teaching: Introducing Critical Whiteness Pedagogy. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 48*(1), 32–50. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11256-015-0344-7

Matias, C. E., & Zembylas, M. (2014). 'When saying you care is not really caring': Emotions of disgust, whiteness ideology, and teacher education. *Critical Studies in Education, 55*(3), 319–337. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2014.922489

Mauch, R. (2020, June 22). North Texas high school musical groups make history with bids to elite competition. *Fort Worth Star-Telegram. https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/education/article243583287.html*

McGee, K. (2021, May 28) Texas bill to ban the teaching of 'critical race theory' spiked at the last minute on a technicality. https://www.kvue.com/article/news/politics/texas-legislature/texas-bill-to-ban-the-teaching-of-critical-race-theory-spiked-at-the-last-minute-on-a-technicality/269-4b392c78-3c33-4c5e-a212-7b07a899d307

Mcpherson, G. E. (2009). The role of parents in children's musical development. *Psychology of Music, 37*(1), 91–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735607086049

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study applications in Education*. Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th ed.)*.* Jossey-Bass.

Meyers, B. D. (2018). Attitudes of high school band directors in the United States toward solo and ensemble activities. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, 216,* 47-64. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.216.0047

Michel, L. (1999). Combining focus groups and interviews: telling how it is; telling how it feels. In Barbour, R. S., & Kitzinger, J. (Eds.) Developing Focus Group Research (pp. 36-46). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208857

Miller, R. E. (1994). A dysfunctional culture: Competition in music. Music Educators Journal, 18(3), 29-33. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3398761

Milner, H. R., IV. (2007). Race, culture and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Education Researcher, 36*(7), 388-400. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07309471

Milner, H. R., IV. (2012). But what is urban education? *Urban Education, 47*(3), 556-561. https://doi.org.10.1177/0042085912447516

Mitchell, N. (2010). The impact of evaluative performances on the what and who of music education. *Canadian Music Educator, 51*(4), 41-42.

Morrison, S. J., Price, H. E., Geiger, C. G., & Cornacchio, R. A. (2009). The effect of conductor expressivity on ensemble performance evaluation. Journal of Research in Music Education, 57, 37-49. https://doi.org/10.1177/002249409332679

Mulcahy, K. L. (2017). The effects of resources on the performance of competitive high school marching bands [Doctoral dissertation, Boson University]. https://hdl.handle.net/2144/20867

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2020). *Public High School Graduation Rates.* The Condition of Education 2020. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_coi.pdf

National Education Agency. (2019). *Asians/Pacific Islanders: Educational Issues.* http://www.nea.org/home/15571.htm

Neill, S. L. (2005). Motivating factors for students participating in High School orchestra programs and music enrichment activities. Texas Music Education Research, 67-73. https://www.tmea.org/wp-content/uploads/Research/TexasMusicEducationResearch_2005.pdf

Nussbaum, K. (2020). *"Failing in spite of wonderfulness": High-stakes ensemble adjudication in low-income schools* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Division of Music Education, University of North Texas.

National String Project Consortium. (2010). Wanted: 3000 string teachers! The status of string and orchestra programs in United States schools: A white paper. http://www.astaweb.com/app_themes/public/uploads/pdf/whitepaper.pdf

Office for Civil Rights. (2014). Civil rights data collection: Data snapshot (Teacher equity). *U.S. Department of Education*. https://ocrdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/CRDC-Teacher-Equity-Snapshot.pdf

O'Leary, E. (2016). Characteristics of communities with Bands of America Grand National Finalists: 2001-2013. *Journal of Band Research, 51*(2), 56-66.

O'Leary, E. J. (2019). A Phenomenological study of competition in high school bands. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, 220*, 43-61. https://doi.org/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.220.0043

Omi, M. & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the United States* (3rd ed). Routledge.

Pang, V. O. (2006). Fighting the marginalization of Asian American students with caring schools: Focusing on curricular change. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 9(*1), 67–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320500490754

Parker, E. C. (2015). Investigating selective practices in high school choral ensembles: An intrinsic case study. In M. R. Campbell & L. K. Thompson (Eds.), *Analyzing Influences: Research on Decision Making and the Music Education Curriculum* (pp. 127-147). Information Age.

Parker, E. C. (2020). *Adolescents on Music* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190671358.001.0001

Parsad, B, & Speigelman, M. (2012). Arts education in public elementary and secondary schools: 1999–2000 and 2009–10. NCES doc. no. 2012- 014. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice (4th ed.). SAGE.

Pitts, S. E., & Robinson, K. (2016). Dropping in and dropping out: Experiences of sustaining and ceasing amateur participation in classical music. *British Journal of Music Education, 33*(3), 327–346. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051716000152

Pope, D. A. & Barnes, G. V. (2015). Influence of education, performance level, and presentation medium on evaluations of string orchestra performances. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, 203*, 7-22. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.203.0007

Powell. S. R. (in press). Competition, ideology, and the one-dimensional music program. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education.*

Rawlings, J. (2019). Benefits and challenges of large- ensemble instrumental music adjudicated events: Insights from experienced music teachers. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education, 37*(2), 46-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123318777824

Rawlings, J. R. & Stoddard, S. A. (2017). Peer connectedness in the middle school band program. *Research Studies in Music Education, 39*(1), 121-135. https://doi.org/ 10.1177/1321103X17703575

Rickels, D. A., Councill, K. H., Fredrickson, W. E., Hairston, M. J., Porter, A. M., & Schmidt, M. (2010). Influences on career choice among music education audition candidates: A pilot study. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 57*(4), 292–307. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429409350779

Ritsema, R. A. (n.d.). *A History of the American String Teachers Association: The First Twenty-Five Years.* [ebook]. ASTA. https://www.astastrings.org/Web/History/Web/About_ASTA/History.aspx?hkey=a3f82395-c9f6-43ae-8247-d6683632bc8f (Original work published 1972)

Rojas, L., & Liou, D. D. (2017). Social justice teaching through the sympathetic touch of caring and high expectations for students of color. *Journal of Teacher Education, 68*(1), 28–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487116676314

Rooney, E. (2015). "I'm just going through the motions": High-stakes accountability and teachers' access to intrinsic rewards, American Journal of Education, 121, 475-500. https://doi.org/195-6744/2015/12104-0001

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Sage.

Salvador, K., & Allegood, K. (2014). Access to music education with regard to race in two urban areas. *Arts Education Policy Review, 115*, 82-92. https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2014.914389

Schaffer, C. L., white, M., & Brown, C. M. (2018). A tale of three cities: Defining urban schools within the context of varied geographic areas. *Education and Urban Society, 50*(6), 507–523. https://doi.org/ 10.1177/0013124517713605

Scruggs, B. B. (2009). Learning outcomes in two divergent middle school string orchestra classroom environments: A comparison of a learner-centered and teacher-centered approach. [Doctoral dissertation, Georgia State University]. ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/music_diss/1

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Qualitative Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (4th ed.). Teachers College Press.

Serwer, A. (2019, April). White nationalism's deep American roots. *The Atlantic.* https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/04/adam-serwer-madison-grant-white-nationalism/583258/

Shaw, R. D. (2014). Work-life balance of competitive marching band teachers: A multiple case study. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, 200*, 63-80. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.200.0063

Skousen, J. D., & Domangue, E. (2020). Leadership for social justice in high-poverty schools: Exploration of equity and fundraising in an urban-suburban school. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 23*(1), 93–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458919883320

Smith, B. P., Mick, J. P., & Alexander, M. L. (2018). The status of strings and orchestra programs in U.S. schools. *String Research Journal, 8*(1), 15–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948499218769607

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). From racial stereotyping and deficit discourse toward a critical race theory in teacher education. *Multicultural Education, 9*(1), 2–8.

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for educational research. *Qualitatice Inquiry, 8*(1), 23–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103

Speer, B. (2012). Socioeconomic status and band contest ratings. *Texas Music Education Research, 2012,* 53-63. https://www.tmea.org/wp-content/uploads/Research/TexasMusicEducationResearch_2012.pdf

Spring, J. (2019). *American Education*. Routledge.

Springer, D. G., & Bradley, K. D. (2018). Investigating adjudicator bias in concert band evaluations: An application of the many-facets rasch model. *Musicae Scientiae, 22*, 377-393. https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864917697782

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research.* SAGE.

Stamer, R. A. (2004). Choral student perceptions of the music contest experience. *Update: Research Applications in Music Education, 22*(2), 5-12. https://doi.org/ 10.1177/875512330402200 20102

Stamer, R. A. (2006). Changes in choral student perceptions of the music contest experience. *Update: Research Applications in Music Education, 46*(3), 46-56. https://doi.org/ 10.1177/87551233060250010106

Stern, J. (2021). Correlations between socioeconomic status and scores at a marching band contest. *Journal of Brand Research, 56*(2), 1–12.

Strietelmeier, A. (2019, March 6-9). *The status of music programs in American public schools, 2007-2009* [Poster presentation]. American String Teachers Association Conference, Albuquerque, NM.

Tan, L. (2017). On practice, skill and competition: A pragmatist theory of action for instrumental music education. Contributions to Music Education, 42, 17-34.

Texas Administrative Code §74.1 (1996 & rev. 2020). http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter074/ch074a.html#74.1

Texas Administrative Code §74.2 (1996 & rev. 2015). http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter074/ch074a.html#74.1

Texas Demographic Center. (2019). Texas population projections 2010 to 2050. https://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/publications/2019/20190925_PopProjectionsBrief.pdf

Texas Education Agency. (2014). *Enrollment in Texas public schools: 2012-13.* (Document No. GE14 601 06) https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Enroll_2012-13.pdf

Texas Education Agency. (2020a). *Enrollment in Texas public schools, 2019-20.* (Document No. GE20 601 12). https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/enroll_2019-20.pdf

Texas Education Agency. (2020b). Texas academic performance reports. https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/texas-academic-performance-reports

Texas Education Agency. (2020c). *District type glossary of terms, 2018-2019*. https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-data/district-type-data-search/district-type-glossary-of-terms-2018-19#teadist10

Texas Education Agency. (2020d). *Campus and district type data search.* https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-data/district-type-data-search/district-type-glossary-of-terms-2018-19#teadist

Texas Music Educators Association. (2020). Membership homepage. Retrieved from https://www.tmea.org/

Thornton, L., & Bergee, M. (2008). Career choice influences among music education students at major schools of music. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*,177, 7–17. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40319448

Tillman, L. C. (2002). Culturally sensitive research approaches: An African-American perspective. *Educational Researcher, 31*(9), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X031009003

Tucker, O. G. (2020). “Everybody is good enough”: Band teacher agency in a highly competitive environment [Doctoral dissertation, University of North Texas]. UNT Digital Library. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1707234/

University Interscholastic League. (n.d.). Music homepage. Retrieved from https://www.uiltexas.org/music

U.S. Department of Education. (2018). Purpose: Title I, Part A. https://www2.ed.gov/print/programs/titleiparta/index.html

Valencia, R. R. (2000). Inequalities and the schooling of minority students in Texas: Historical and contemporary conditions. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 22*(4), 445–459. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986300224005

Versprille, L. F. (2019). Qualities of transformational learning in the high school orchestra classroom: A heuristic study. [Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University St. Paul]. DigitalCommons @ CSP. https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/cup_commons_grad_edd/375

Vogt Williams, D. (2019). Thank you for all the 2s. *Bandmasters Review, April*, 13–14. http://apps.texasbandmasters.org/archives/pdfs/bmr/2019_04_vogtwilliams.pdf

West, C. (2012). Teaching music in an era of high-stakes testing and budget reductions. *Arts Education Policy Review, 113*(2), 75–79. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2012.656503

Wilson, W. J. (2011). The declining significance of race: Revisited & revised. *Daedalus, 140*(2), 55–69. https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00077

Wilson, W. J. (2012). *The declining significance of race: Blacks and changing America* (3rd ed). Chicago University.

Yang, P. Q. (2000). Ethnic studies: Issues and approaches. State University of New York Press.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Yoshihara, M. (2008). *Musicians from a different shore: Asians and Asian Americans in classical music.* Temple University Press.

Zdzinski, S. F. & Barnes, G. V. (2002). Development and validation of a string performance rating scale. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 50,* 245–255. https://doi.org/10.2307/3345801